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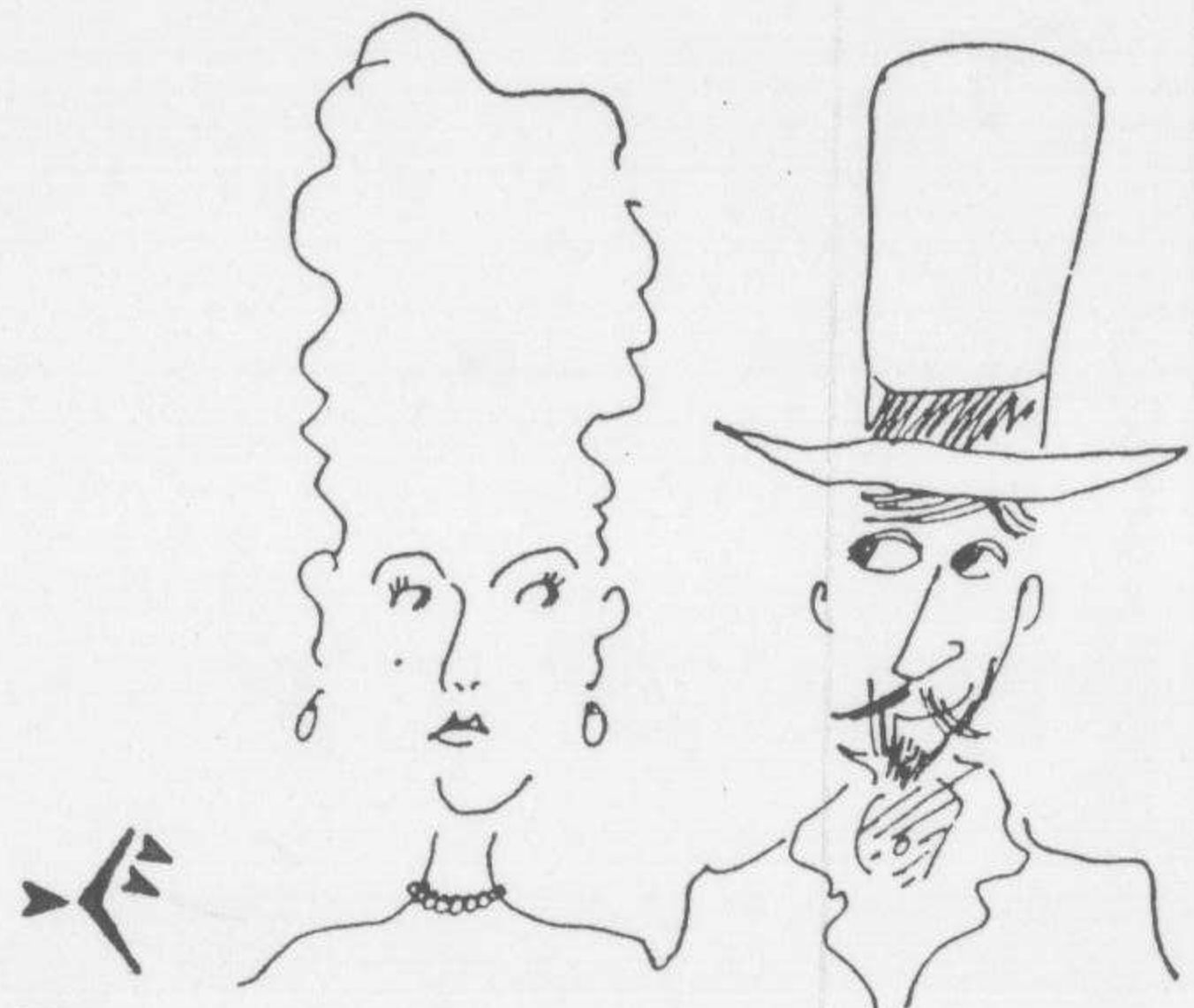
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RECINTO DE RIO PIEDRAS

Georges Feydeau's  
farce

# A FLEA IN HER EAR

a new English version

by CAROL JOHNSTON



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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(A FLEA IN HER EAR)

ISBN 0-87129-655-1

A FLEA IN HER EAR  
*A Farce in Three Acts*  
For Nine Men and Five Women\*

CHARACTERS

VICTOR-EMMANUEL	
CHANDEBISE . . . . .	<i>an insurance man</i>
RAYMONDE . . . . .	<i>his pretty wife</i>
CAMILLE → . . . . .	<i>his nephew</i>
ANTOINETTE → . . . . .	<i>the maid</i>
ETIENNE . . . . .	<i>the butler</i>
DR. FINACHE . . . . .	<i>the company doctor</i>
ROMAIN TOURNEL . . . . .	<i>an insurance agent</i>
HOMENIDES DE HISTANGUA . . . . .	<i>a client</i>
LUCIENNE . . . . .	<i>his wife</i>
AUGUSTIN FERRAILLON . . . . .	<i>owner of a hotel</i>
OLYMPE . . . . .	<i>his wife</i>
EUGENIE . . . . .	<i>the chambermaid</i>
POCHE . . . . .	<i>the porter</i>
BAPTISTIN . . . . .	<i>Ferrailon's uncle</i>
ALBICOCCO . . . . .	<i>a guest at the hotel</i>

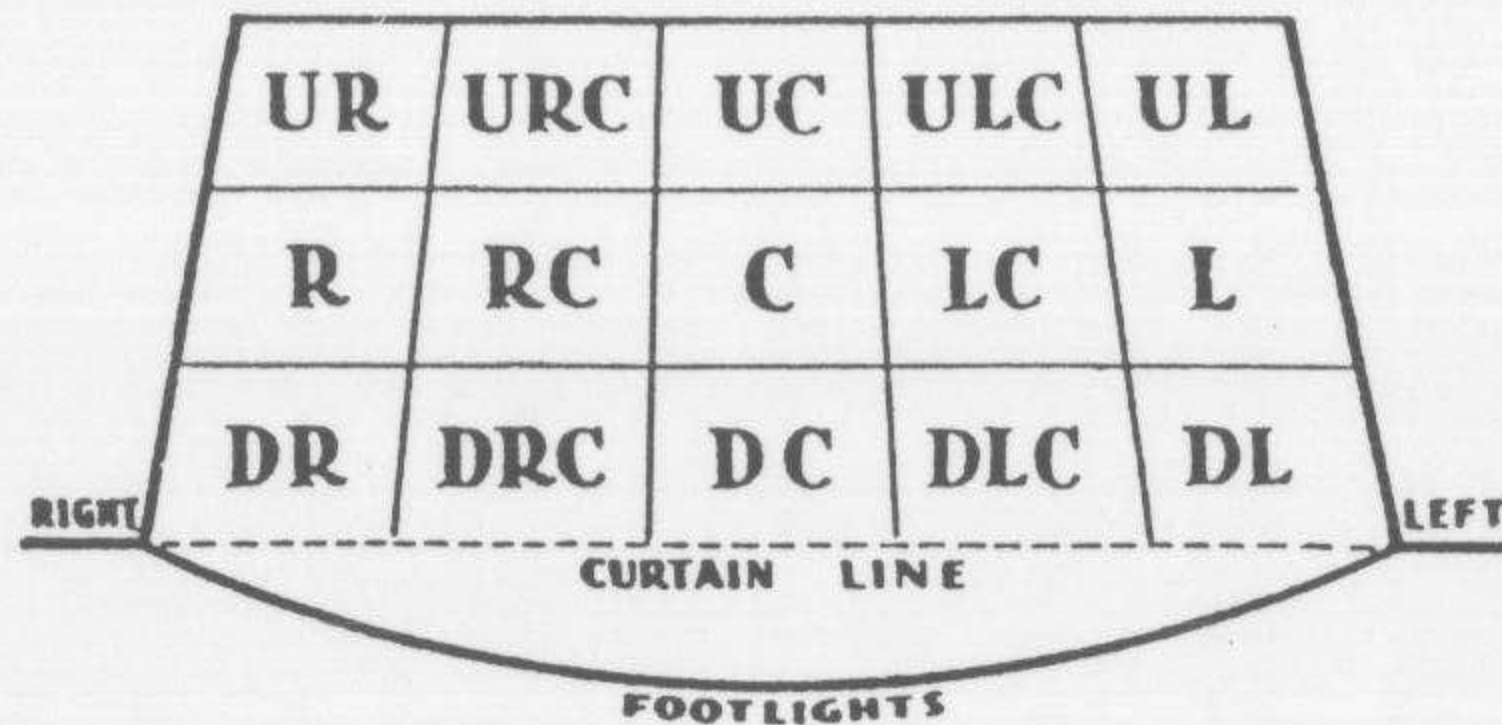
PLACE: *The Chandebise living room and the  
Hotel Pussycat, Paris.*

TIME: *Around 1900.*

*\*The roles of both Chandebise and Poche are played  
by the same person.*



# CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



## STAGE POSITIONS

*Upstage* means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: UR for *up right*, RC for *right center*, DLC for *down left center*, etc. A territory designated on the stage refers to a general area, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

## ACT ONE

SCENE: The Chandebise living room. The furnishings suggest the home of a prosperous Parisian family. There is a love seat with end tables, two chairs and a tea table. There may be several high-back chairs placed against the walls. D R is an ornate writing desk; U C a chiffonier and near it, on a stand, an old-fashioned telephone. D R there are French windows; R there is a door leading to the vestibule and the main door. U R C there are stairs, which remain throughout the play, leading to the upstairs bedrooms. There are three doors in the left wall: the U L door leads to the kitchen; L door to a closet, and D L door to the library.

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: CAMILLE, a tall, handsome and elegantly dressed man, is leaning against the chiffonier, consulting some papers. The door U L opens, and ANTOINETTE, a pert young woman in a maid's uniform, creeps up behind CAMILLE, grabs his head in her two hands and gives him a quick kiss.

CAMILLE (surprised, and maintaining his equilibrium as much as he can). Come now! (This should come out something like "om ow.")



ANTOINETTE. Don't worry. Everybody's out.

(CAMILLE shrugs, then puts his arms around her. At this moment, the main door opens, and ETIENNE, the butler, and DR. FINACHE enter.)

ETIENNE. Come right this way, Doctor.

ANTOINETTE and CAMILLE (together). Oh.

(CAMILLE takes off like a rabbit and disappears U L. ANTOINETTE, in the meantime, has quickly passed over to R and stands there rather stupidly.)

ETIENNE. What are you doing here?

ANTOINETTE (somewhat disconcerted). What?

Me? I was getting the dinner menu.

ETIENNE. Menu? You know that Monsieur and Madame have left. Go--back to the stove. The cook's place is in the kitchen.

ANTOINETTE. But----

ETIENNE. Out! (ANTOINETTE goes out, U L.)

FINACHE. You're a dictatorial husband!

ETIENNE. That's what women need. If you don't lead them, they lead you. They love a tyrant.

FINACHE. Bravo!

ETIENNE. You see, Doctor, that little woman is as faithful as a dog, but jealous as a tiger. She's always flitting about, spying on me.

FINACHE. You don't say---- Well, since Monsieur is not at home----

ETIENNE (good-natured). That's all right. I have plenty of time. I'll keep you company.

FINACHE (a little disconcerted). That's very nice of you, but, my good man -- your duties----

ETIENNE. Not at all. I'm not in a hurry.

FINACHE (bowing ironically). You wouldn't perhaps know what time he's due back.

ETIENNE. Not for at least a quarter of an hour.

FINACHE. The devil. (Starting toward the door.) I have a sick patient to see not far from here, and I might as well dispatch him.

ETIENNE. Oh! (Misunderstanding, and scandalized.) Oh!

FINACHE (understanding his thought). No, I am dispatching my visits, not my patients. I'll be back in fifteen minutes.

ETIENNE. Very good, Doctor.

FINACHE. If M. Chande-bise returns before I get back, would you tell him that I examined the client he sent me. Don Carlos Homenidès de Histangua is in perfect health and M. Chande-bise can issue an insurance policy with confidence.

ETIENNE. That fellow. I know him. His wife is in the library right now--waiting for Madame.

FINACHE. What a small world.

ETIENNE. They dined here day before yesterday. (Sitting down and getting comfortable.) But tell me, Doctor, since you are here----

FINACHE. Etienne, you're much the best butler I know. Most of them are so stuffy.

ETIENNE (ingenuously). Stuffy, sir? Actually, I'd like to ask you about something my wife and I were discussing this morning. Please sit down, Doctor.

FINACHE (obeying ironically). Forgive me.

ETIENNE. Now, tell me, when you have a sort of continual pain right here--(He taps lightly on each side of the abdomen.)--what could that be?

FINACHE. That often comes from the ovaries.

ETIENNE. Well--that's where I have it.

FINACHE (trying hard to remain serious). Well, my friend, we'll have to take them out.

ETIENNE (getting up). Oh, no! I have them, I



keep them!

(LUCIENNE, a well-dressed, sophisticated woman in her early thirties, appears at the door D L.)

LUCIENNE (to ETIENNE). Tell me, my good man  
----(Noticing FINACHE.) Oh! Pardon, mon-  
sieur. Are you sure that Mme. Chandebise is  
coming back?

ETIENNE. Absolutely, madame. She was very  
careful to tell me when Madame--ah-- \  
Madame ----

LUCIENNE (coming to his aid). Homenidès de  
Histangua.

ETIENNE (approving). That's right. "When  
Madame--(Gesture.)--comes-- don't let her  
leave. I absolutely must see her," she said.

LUCIENNE. Just what she wrote me. That's why  
I'm a bit astonished. Anyway, I'll wait a little  
while longer.

ETIENNE. As a matter of fact, I was just saying  
to the Doctor ----

FINACHE (ironically). Yes, we were talking ----

ETIENNE (introducing). Dr. Finache, the chief  
Medical Examiner of the Boston Life Company,  
who was just telling me that he had seen  
Madame's husband this morning.

FINACHE. That's right, madame. I had the plea-  
sure of examining Monsieur de Histangua.

LUCIENNE. My husband had himself examined?  
How funny.

FINACHE. I congratulate you, madame. Your  
husband is in full and vigorous health.

LUCIENNE (in a low tone, with a sigh). Ah--Doc-  
tor--you're telling me.

FINACHE. It's very gratifying.

LUCIENNE. Yes, but very fatiguing.

FINACHE (amused). There's nothing gained with-  
out trouble.

ETIENNE. That little idiot wife of mine should  
have such a husband.

FINACHE. Perhaps a suggestion could be made--  
a man with such extraordinary vigor ----

LUCIENNE (laughing). No, Doctor, I'm not that  
tired.

FINACHE (laughing). Pardon, madame. It's this  
devil of an Etienne who's making me say such  
silly things. Well, I'm on my way, but I'll be  
right back. (Bowing.) Madame, *enchante*.

ETIENNE (accompanying the doctor). What we  
were talking about, Doctor--when I press like  
that, my ovaries ----

FINACHE. Take a good laxative. (They go out R.)

LUCIENNE (watching the doctor go off). What an  
odd doctor. (Looking at her watch.) This is  
what Raymonde calls "waiting for me impatiently."  
Oh, well.

(CAMILLE, comes in U L with some papers.)

CAMILLE. Pardon, madame. (He should speak  
in an absolutely incomprehensible fashion,  
pronouncing only the vowels--and not even  
those very distinctly.)

LUCIENNE. Monsieur?

CAMILLE. It is of course the Director of the  
Boston Life Company that Madame is waiting  
for?

LUCIENNE (somewhat disconcerted). What?

CAMILLE (in the same indistinct way). I said, it  
is without doubt the Director of the Boston  
Life Company whom Madame is waiting for?

LUCIENNE (with an anxious smile). Excuse me?  
I didn't understand what you said.

CAMILLE (more slowly, but in just as confused a



way). I am asking the person whom Madame is waiting for. It is indeed the Dir----

LUCIENNE (interrupting him and speaking loudly and slowly, as though to a person who is hard of hearing). Oh--no. I am French, French, *Francaise*.

CAMILLE. What? But, ah, I am also----

LUCIENNE. You could ask the valet, the butler. I'm not from around here. I am expecting Mme. Chandebise, with whom I have a rendez-vous--a date--an appointment.

CAMILLE. Please excuse me. (He crosses to chiffonier, puts the papers away.) I was asking that because if it had been for the Director of the Boston Life Company ----

LUCIENNE. Yes, sir. Yes. (CAMILLE exits D L.) What's that? A Martian?

(ETIENNE arrives from U R.)

ETIENNE. Madame is not too bored?

LUCIENNE. My friend. Tell me. A man came in here a moment ago----

ETIENNE (with a slight gesture of surprise). A man?

LUCIENNE. Yes. He spoke to me in some incomprehensible language. I don't know what he said. (Imitating Camille.) Aw, ai, eh, eh, like that.

ETIENNE. That's Monsieur Camille.

LUCIENNE. A foreigner?

ETIENNE. Not at all. That's Monsieur's nephew. He has a defective pronunciation, madame. He cannot pronounce his consonants.

LUCIENNE. Really?

ETIENNE. In time, one learns to understand. I get a few words here and there.

LUCIENNE. How?

ETIENNE. He is here all day as M. Chandebise's secretary. He couldn't work anywhere else because of his pitiful way of speaking.

LUCIENNE. Good heavens! A man who only has vowels to offer you.

ETIENNE. Oh, yes, it's not enough. Actually, in writing, he uses consonants, too, but one cannot always write. It's really a pity--such a serious and steady boy.

LUCIENNE. Yes, quite handsome.

ETIENNE. Yes, indeed. Ah, here comes Madame now.

(RAYMONDE, a pretty, vivacious woman of about thirty, enters like a squall from U R.)

LUCIENNE (going to her). Raymonde! Finally.

RAYMONDE. My poor friend! I'm so distressed.

(To ETIENNE.) Leave us alone, Etienne.

ETIENNE. Yes, madame. (To LUCIENNE.)

Madame will excuse me? (ETIENNE leaves.)

RAYMONDE. I made you wait.

LUCIENNE (mockingly). Oh--do you think so?

RAYMONDE. I'll explain everything. Lucienne, I wrote you to come because something very, very serious has happened. My husband is being unfaithful.

LUCIENNE (shocked). Victor Emmanuel?

RAYMONDE. Victor Emmanuel. Exactly.

LUCIENNE. Have you proof?

RAYMONDE. No, but I'll get it, the beast, I'll get it.

LUCIENNE. How?

RAYMONDE. I don't know. That's why I called on you.

LUCIENNE. I will find proof?

RAYMONDE. Yes. Don't say no, Lucienne. You're



my best friend, aren't you? I consider you my best friend.

LUCIENNE. Certainly.

RAYMONDE. Then I have the right to ask.

LUCIENNE. Of course.

RAYMONDE. What should I do to catch my husband?

LUCIENNE. Is that why you asked me to come?

RAYMONDE. Of course!

LUCIENNE. How should I know? Besides, perhaps Victor Emmanuel is faithful!

RAYMONDE (Contemptuously) You think so?

LUCIENNE. Why do you think he's not?

RAYMONDE. Lucienne, what would you say if your husband suddenly stopped being a husband --in a real sense. Just stopped. (Snaps fingers.) Like that.

LUCIENNE. I would say "Thank God."

RAYMONDE. That's what you think before it happens. To think I was bored! All that love--that continuous springtime--I found monotonous. I even used to dream about taking a lover--just to liven things up--to put some clouds in those oh-so-blue skies.

LUCIENNE. A lover? You?

RAYMONDE. Everybody has those moments. I had already picked him out. Romain Tournel, --the one who dined with us day before yesterday. Didn't you notice that Tournel was making up to me outrageously? I'm astonished you didn't see.

LUCIENNE. Well!

RAYMONDE. Of course, he'd be absolutely delighted. But, now that Victor Emmanuel is deceiving me--I can't deceive him.

LUCIENNE. Shall I tell you something?

RAYMONDE. Please.

LUCIENNE (confidentially). Fundamentally, you're crazy about your husband.

RAYMONDE. Me?

LUCIENNE. You.

RAYMONDE. Now wait. That makes me angry.

I really want to deceive him, but his deceiving me, ah, that's unbearable!

LUCIENNE. You have a delightful moral code, but do you have any proof?

RAYMONDE. Proof? When a husband has been--for years and years--an impetuous tyrant--and suddenly--nothing--completely--(Gesture.)--nothing.

LUCIENNE. That doesn't prove he's unfaithful. It might prove something, but not that he's unfaithful.

RAYMONDE (searching her handbag, from which she finally takes out a pair of suspenders, which she brandishes). All right. What about these?

LUCIENNE. What are those?

RAYMONDE. Suspenders!

LUCIENNE. That's what I thought they were.

RAYMONDE. And do you know whose they are, these suspenders?

LUCIENNE. Your husband's?

RAYMONDE. You see, you're not defending him any more.

LUCIENNE. I trust that you are not carrying someone else's suspenders around in your handbag.

RAYMONDE (who has put the suspenders back in her handbag). Exactly. Now, then. Can you explain to me how it happens that my husband received them this morning--in the mail?

LUCIENNE. In the mail?



RAYMONDE (innocently). I opened the package inadvertently.

LUCIENNE. Why were you going through his mail?

RAYMONDE (in a most natural manner). Only to see what was in it.

LUCIENNE (shrugging). That's a good reason.

RAYMONDE. If someone sent him his suspenders in the mail, it's because he forgot them--some place.

LUCIENNE. Yes.

RAYMONDE. And do you know where it was, this some place?

LUCIENNE. I can't wait to hear.

RAYMONDE. The Hotel Pussycat.

LUCIENNE. What on earth is that?

RAYMONDE. It's not exactly a family boarding house.

LUCIENNE. The Hotel Pussycat? It doesn't sound like one.

RAYMONDE. If you could see it! I'm sure it's one of those places.

LUCIENNE. You saw it?

RAYMONDE. I just came back. That's why I'm late.

LUCIENNE. Oh.

RAYMONDE. You can understand. I had to be sure. I said to myself, there is only one way: question the owner. So I found the owner--and questioned him. It's frightful how they stick together. He hardly listened to me.

LUCIENNE. That's the ABC of the profession.

RAYMONDE. He said, "Madame, I never divulge the names of my guests." Lucienne, we have only ourselves to count on. Men stick together. So must we. Tell me what to do.

LUCIENNE. You've caught me off guard.

RAYMONDE. Think of something. Have a stroke of genius.

LUCIENNE (thinking). I have it! Tonight, sit down with your husband and ask him to explain the whole thing.

RAYMONDE. He'd just lie. Men lie--almost as much as women do.

LUCIENNE. Wait a moment--there might be a way----

RAYMONDE. What? Tell me!

LUCIENNE. You must write your husband a passionate love letter on perfumed stationery, asking him to meet you.

RAYMONDE. Meet me?

LUCIENNE. You sign a fictitious name, of course, and if he arrives at the rendezvous----

RAYMONDE. Perfect. We write a passionate letter to dear Victor Emmanuel!

LUCIENNE. All right, let's write to Victor Emmanuel!

RAYMONDE (disappointed). No, it won't work. He'd recognize my handwriting.

LUCIENNE. Of course. And it was such a good idea!

RAYMONDE. Wait. Yours--he'd never recognize yours. You write to him.

LUCIENNE. Me! Oh, no! I couldn't!

RAYMONDE (very severely). You're my best friend.

LUCIENNE (weakening). All right. You'll lead me to hell.

RAYMONDE. Well, you'll find my husband there.

LUCIENNE (resigned, seating herself at the writing desk). Give me some writing paper.



RAYMONDE. In the top drawer----

LUCIENNE. Not your writing paper. He'd recognize it.

RAYMONDE. I have this mauve I bought for the country. . . It's not very suggestive. . . .

LUCIENNE. No, but we'll put a lot of perfume on it.

RAYMONDE. I have exactly what we need. Some ghastly carnation clover that I was going to take back. It's perfect for the occasion. Wait a moment. (As she speaks, she goes to press the electric button near the window.)

(At this moment, CAMILLE enters D L.)

CAMILLE. Excuse me.

RAYMONDE. What do you want, Camille?

CAMILLE (in his incomprehensible language).

Don't mind me. I was looking to see if Victor Emmanuel had come back yet.

RAYMONDE (in a conversational tone). No, not yet. Why?

CAMILLE (in the same way). Because I had some mail for him to sign.

RAYMONDE. He'll be here soon.

CAMILLE. Good. I'm going to wait. There's nothing else to do, is there?

RAYMONDE. Evidently. (To LUCIENNE, who was standing with her mouth open, looking from one to other.) Why are you looking at me that way?

LUCIENNE. Nothing. Nothing.

CAMILLE (to LUCIENNE). So, madame, my cousin has finally come back. She didn't make you wait too long?

LUCIENNE (A little disconcerted by this direct ad-

dress and wishing to appear to have understood). As a matter of fact, sir, yes. I recognize you. We spoke a little while ago.

RAYMONDE. No, no, no. He says that I've finally come back and I made you wait too long.

CAMILLE (approving). That's it, that's it.

LUCIENNE (embarrassed). Oh, yes! I understand perfectly.

RAYMONDE (introducing). Monsieur Camille Chandebise, my cousin. Madame Carlos Homenidès de Histangua.

LUCIENNE. Very happy, sir. Excuse me if I didn't understand you a little while ago, but I am very hard of hearing.

CAMILLE. You're too kind, madame. The truth is that I am difficult to understand, since I have a speech defect.

LUCIENNE (smiling awkwardly). Oh, yes, yes, yes. (To RAYMONDE.) What?

RAYMONDE. He says he has a speech defect.

LUCIENNE (pretending to be astonished). What?

Yes, perhaps, now that you mention it.

CAMILLE (smiling and bowing). You're too kind.

(ANTOINETTE enters from U L.)

ANTOINETTE. Did Madame ring?

RAYMONDE. Yes, Antoinette. Go into my bathroom and bring me the bottle of perfume which is in the right hand drawer of my vanity.

ANTOINETTE. Yes, madame.

RAYMONDE. It's in a box that has Carnation Clover on the label.

ANTOINETTE. Yes, madame. (She starts toward the stairs, and describes a half circle around CAMILLE as she looks him right in the eye. Then, with her back to the public,



she gives him a violent pinch on the buttock and goes out imperturbably.)

CAMILLE (who has jumped forward in pain). Oh!

RAYMONDE and LUCIENNE (jumping). What?

CAMILLE (while ANTOINETTE goes up stairs).

Nothing, nothing. I had a terrible pain in the hip which made me jump.

RAYMONDE. Rheumatism, no doubt.

CAMILLE (rubbing his hip). Yes, yes, rheumatism, of course.

RAYMONDE. Of course.

CAMILLE. I am going to continue my work elsewhere. (Bowing.) Madame. (He exits D L.)

LUCIENNE (bowing slightly). Monsieur. (To RAYMONDE.) I admire you for understanding one word of his language.

RAYMONDE. One learns--with time, but I love you for pretending you didn't notice----

LUCIENNE. I wanted to be agreeable.

(ANTOINETTE returns, the perfume bottle in her hand.)

ANTOINETTE. Is this it, madame?

RAYMONDE (taking the bottle). That's it, thank you. (ANTOINETTE leaves.) Now then, let's get to work before my husband comes back.

LUCIENNE (preparing to write). Now, let's see. How shall we go about this? Have you gone to the theatre lately?

RAYMONDE. Last Wednesday, Victor Emmanuel, Monsieur Tournel and I went to the Palais-Royal.

LUCIENNE. Monsieur Tournel?

RAYMONDE. The one I told you almost became my lover.

LUCIENNE. Wonderful. Here we go. (Writing.)

"Monsieur. I saw you the other evening at the Palais-Royal."

RAYMONDE. That sounds like a legal document. Say, something like "I am the one who couldn't take her eyes off you the other evening at the Palais-Royal," and none of this "Monsieur" business. Just bang!

LUCIENNE. You have a real aptitude for this. (She tears out the page begun, which she leaves on the desk, and begins again.) "I am the one who couldn't take her eyes from you. . ."

RAYMONDE (dictating). ". . . the other evening at the Palais-Royal." That's warm. Direct.

LUCIENNE. Lively. (Continuing.) "You were in a loge with a lady and another gentleman."

RAYMONDE. Monsieur Tournel.

LUCIENNE. Yes, but that's not up to the lady to say. "Some people near me pointed you out. Since then, I can dream only of you."

RAYMONDE. Don't you think it's a little exaggerated?

LUCIENNE. That's the way it should be. These things seem exaggerated to others, never to oneself.

RAYMONDE. If you are sure, then it must be all right.

LUCIENNE (writing). "I am prepared for a wild, foolish fling. Are you? I shall be waiting for you today at five o'clock at the Hotel Pussy-cat."

RAYMONDE. The same hotel?

LUCIENNE. I don't know any other. (Writing.)

"Ask for the room in the name of M. Chandebise."

RAYMONDE (dictating). "I'll be waiting."

LUCIENNE. Beautiful. (She pours out a little of the perfume and spreads it over the paper.)



RAYMONDE. Marvelous.

LUCIENNE. Three cheers for Carnation Clover! Now the address. (Writing.) M. Victor Emmanuel Chandebise, 95 Mailare Blvd. Personal. *Voilà*. Now, all we need is a messenger.

RAYMONDE. A messenger? I can't send a servant. I can't go myself. If my husband asked for a description of the messenger and got mine, the plot is discovered. While you, on the other hand, are perfect.

LUCIENNE. Wait ----

RAYMONDE. My best friend, yes or no?

LUCIENNE. Apparently. (A bell sounds.)

RAYMONDE. Somebody rang. It must be my husband. Quick--go out the back door.

LUCIENNE. See you in a while. (She exits U L.)

(At this moment, the main door opens, and CHANDEBISE, a solid citizen, enters, speaking to ETIENNE. TOURNEL, a man decidedly aware of his panache, is behind him.)

CHANDEBISE (to ETIENNE). And the Doctor said he would come back?

ETIENNE. Yes, sir.

CHANDEBISE. Good. Very well. (To TOURNEL.) Come on in, old man. I'll be right with you as soon as I glance through my mail.

RAYMONDE (whom they have not seen). Yes, even Camille is waiting for you.

CHANDEBISE. Here you are.

TOURNEL. Good day, dear madame.

RAYMONDE. Good day, Tournel. (To her husband, coldly.) Yes, here I am.

CHANDEBISE. I met Tournel on the stairway and

we came up together.

TOURNEL (taking some papers from the portfolio he is carrying). Yes, I have the list of new clients to be insured.

CHANDEBISE. Perfect. We'll go over it in a little while. (As he speaks, he pulls up his pants.)

RAYMONDE (to whom this gesture has not gone unnoticed). Are your suspenders annoying you?

CHANDEBISE. Yes.

RAYMONDE. That's odd. Aren't those the ones I bought you?

CHANDEBISE. What? Oh, yes, of course.

RAYMONDE. They didn't bother you before.

CHANDEBISE. I have them too tight, I guess.

RAYMONDE (starting toward him). That's easy. I'll loosen them up.

CHANDEBISE (backing away instinctively). No, no. Don't bother. I'll do it myself.

RAYMONDE (turning toward audience, cocking an eyebrow, then turning back to her husband). Just as you wish.

CHANDEBISE (to TOURNEL). Excuse me a moment, will you? I'll be right back.

TOURNEL. Go ahead. No hurry. (As soon as CHANDEBISE has disappeared D L, TOURNEL runs over toward RAYMONDE.) Raymonde, Raymonde, I dreamt of you the whole night.

RAYMONDE (cutting his enthusiasm). No, my friend, thank you. With my husband deceiving me, I'm not about to do the same thing.

TOURNEL (bewildered). What are you talking about?

RAYMONDE. That kind of interlude is fine for someone who has nothing else to think about. (Outraged.) But I have something else to think about.



TOURNEL. I don't care what you think about.  
You gave me every reason to hope----

RAYMONDE. Perhaps. But then there were no  
suspenders. Now there are suspenders.  
Good day. (She goes out U L.)

TOURNEL (astonished). Suspenders? What does  
she mean? Suspenders!

(CAMILLE appears at the door D L.)

CAMILLE (from doorway). Monsieur Tournel.  
My cousin is asking to see you.

TOURNEL (with bad humor). What?

CAMILLE. My cousin is asking to see you.

TOURNEL (still annoyed). I don't understand what  
you are saying. Can't you speak more clearly?

CAMILLE. Wait a moment. (He takes out of his  
pocket a little pad and pencil and writes.) My  
cousin asks for you. (He tears off the sheet  
and passes it over to TOURNEL.)

TOURNEL (reading). "My cousin asks for you."

Oh, very well. (He picks up his papers, and  
leaving behind his bag, goes out D L.)

CAMILLE (once TOURNEL has left). The deuce.  
(Coming down to the front of the stage.) That's  
a "thank you." What a porcupine!

(FINACHE enters through the main door.)

FINACHE. My friend Camille, have you begun to  
recite monologues now?

CAMILLE (jumping). What? It's you, Doctor.

No, I was grumbling about someone.

FINACHE (who does not understand). Yes, yes,  
yes, that's very good. (Changing his tone.)  
And outside of that, you young tomcat, what's  
new?

CAMILLE (approaching FINACHE, rapidly). Shh.  
Keep quiet!

FINACHE. I keep forgetting that you pass your-  
self off as the austere Camille----

CAMILLE (very much on edge). Please! Please!

FINACHE. Actually, I get a great kick out of see-  
ing them imagine you as they do. Tell me, did  
you take my advice?

CAMILLE. Which advice?

FINACHE. In regard to the Hotel Pussycat?

CAMILLE. Shh.

FINACHE. But why? We're alone. Have you been  
there?

CAMILLE (hesitating an instant, glancing R and L,  
then whispering). Yes.

FINACHE. What do you think?

CAMILLE (with his eyes raised). *Magnifique!*

FINACHE. By the way, while I'm thinking about  
it, I might as well give you this.

CAMILLE (coming over to him). What?

FINACHE (taking a jewel box from his pocket).  
What I promised you. What will permit you  
to speak like everybody else.

CAMILLE (in ecstasy). You have it?

FINACHE. Look how pretty it is. (Opening the  
jewel box.) A silver palate, my dear boy,  
like in a fairy tale.

CAMILLE (joining his hands with admiration). Oh!

FINACHE. And in a jewel box. Not everyone can  
carry his palate in a jewel box.

CAMILLE. And I shall be able to speak?

FINACHE. What?

CAMILLE. And I shall be able--wait a moment.  
(He wants to put the palate in his mouth.)

FINACHE (grabbing him by the wrist). No, no,  
not like that. First dip it in water with boric



acid. You never know what hands might have touched it.

CAMILLE. You're right. I was saying--(Articulating to the best of his ability.)--"and I shall be able to speak?"

FINACHE (who has finally understood). And you will be able to speak? Of course. If you have a little talent, you will be able to enter the Comedie Francaise.

CAMILLE (radiantly). Oh, oh, I'm going to put it in water. Thank you. Thank you. (Goes up stairs.)

(CHANDEBISE enters from D L.)

CHANDEBISE. Camille, come with me.

FINACHE (going over to him). He'll be right back. He had something to do. (Shaking his hand.) How are you?

CHANDEBISE. Hello, Doctor. Happy to see you. I wanted to speak to you.

FINACHE. I came a little while ago. Did Etienne tell you?

CHANDEBISE. Yes, yes. With Histangua's medical report. It seems that it's very good.

FINACHE. Yes, one of the best. Here it is. (He takes some papers out of his pocket.)

CHANDEBISE (taking the papers). Thank you.

FINACHE. And what do you have to tell me?

CHANDEBISE. I wanted to consult you on a question which is quite delicate. How shall I explain this? You know that I have a delightful wife.

FINACHE. Oh, yes. On that we agree.

CHANDEBISE. Good. You know, moreover, that nobody is less of a ladies' man than I am.

FINACHE. Ah?

CHANDEBISE (a little vexed). Ah? you say "Ah"? Of course you know that.

FINACHE. But I don't know, my friend.

CHANDEBISE. Well, I'm telling you. My wife is everything for me. Wife, mistress, lover -- and I have always been for her, if I may boast, a husband quite equal to his task.

FINACHE. Ah?

CHANDEBISE. Ah, again.

FINACHE. My friend, I don't know.

CHANDEBISE. I'm telling you. Equal to his task and even more.

FINACHE. Well, that's fine. Congratulations.

CHANDEBISE. Have you seen the play *You Have— Nothing To Declare?*

FINACHE. *You Have Nothing to Declare?* The Play? No, I haven't.

CHANDEBISE. Never mind. It's about a young man on his honeymoon. He's in a train compartment with his wife, and right in the middle of teaching her the first principles of matrimonial joy, when a customs officer opens the door--and closes the lesson with "You have nothing to declare?"

FINACHE (laughing). What a traumatic experience.

CHANDEBISE. You laugh. I see that the customs officer didn't come into your compartment.

FINACHE. No, he didn't.

CHANDEBISE. From that time on, this becomes an obsession for the man in the play. Every time that he has a fancy to reopen that first lesson with his wife, he sees the customs agent and he hears "You have nothing to declare?" and click--(Emphatically.)--he has nothing!

FINACHE. That could be very annoying.

CHANDEBISE (with conviction). Yes, indeed, dear



fellow. Could be and is. I'm telling you because I know--from experience!

FINACHE. Experience?

CHANDEBISE. That is exactly what happens to me with my wife.

FINACHE. Oh?

CHANDEBISE. Exactly. One fine day, or rather one rotten night, I was feeling amorous, as I usually do, and Mme. Chandebise was receptive to my expression of love. (Takes a breath, then grimly.) Then, all of a sudden---

FINACHE. The customs officer came in?

CHANDEBISE. In a sense. An uneasiness, a disturbance, I don't know what. I felt myself becoming a child, a very small child.

FINACHE. The devil!

CHANDEBISE. Hardly. (Changing his tone.) At first, I didn't get very worried--because of my glorious past. I said to myself, "After all, a defeat today, revenge tomorrow."

FINACHE. That's a healthy attitude.

CHANDEBISE. But the next day I had the unlucky idea to say to myself, "Be careful, old man, tonight could be another disaster!" Anxiety seized me, and--(Gesture.)--again--complete failure.

FINACHE. My poor Chandebise!

CHANDEBISE (desperate). From then on, it's been a fixation. I don't even dare ask myself, "Tonight, will I?" "No," I say to myself, "tonight I will not", and--(Gesture.)--I don't.

FINACHE. You're merely the victim of auto-suggestion. You have to dominate this thing. A little force of character. Where there's a will, there's a way.

CHANDEBISE. Ah? Ah?

FINACHE. Instead of asking yourself, "Will I?" you should tell yourself, "I will." Never doubt yourself, certainly not in love. Besides, you should be thinking about your partner. Forget yourself. Ah, Chandebise, everything that you have just told me, you should have told your wife, and you should have told her clearly, without trying to be coy with her. You would have laughed together. The upset would have passed, and everything would have gone swimmingly.

CHANDEBISE (hopefully). Perhaps you are right.

FINACHE. Besides that, you need some exercise. You work too much--spend too much time at your desk. Take a look at yourself. (He puts his knee in Chandebise's back and makes him straighten up.) Your posture is appalling. That's why I ordered you those American suspenders. Probably you haven't even put them on!

CHANDEBISE (raising his vest to show his suspenders). But I did! I force myself to wear them. I even gave all my own suspenders to my cousin Camille. (Glances down.) Really, these are very ugly.

FINACHE. Well you're the only one who sees them.

CHANDEBISE. Oh, no, a little while ago my wife almost put her nose under here.

FINACHE. So what?

CHANDEBISE. Thank you! I'm already ridiculous enough in her eyes.

FINACHE. Listen, old man, you shouldn't be vain in front of your wife. Now sit down. Maybe I'd better listen to your heart.

(At this moment, the main door opens, and LUCIENNE



appears.)

CHANDEBISE. Madame, what a pleasure.

LUCIENNE. Monsieur, how are you?

CHANDEBISE. Not bad. You have come to see Raymonde, of course?

LUCIENNE. I have just left her. Hello again, Doctor.

FINACHE (bowing). Madame--again *enchanté*.

CHANDEBISE. I see I have no need to introduce you. You didn't find any tension?

LUCIENNE (indicating FINACHE). In the Doctor?

CHANDEBISE. No. In my wife. I don't know what's wrong with her this morning. She's not herself.

LUCIENNE. I didn't notice.

CHANDEBISE (relieved). I'm glad to hear that.

(RAYMONDE appears at the door U L.)

RAYMONDE. There you are.

LUCIENNE (going toward her). Hello, again.

RAYMONDE (in a low tone). Well?

LUCIENNE (in a low tone). It's done. He's following me here.

RAYMONDE. Good.

(ETIENNE enters, bringing in the letter on a tray.)

ETIENNE. Monsieur.

CHANDEBISE. What?

LUCIENNE (in a low tone, to RAYMONDE). There it is.

ETIENNE. A letter for you which a messenger has just brought. Marked personal.

CHANDEBISE (amazed). For me? Let's see it.

(To the two women.) Will you permit me,

please? (He plants his glasses on the end of

his nose, opens the letter and skims it rapidly. An exclamation of surprise escapes him.)

Well, well, well.

RAYMONDE (between her teeth). What does it say --dear?

CHANDEBISE. It says--nothing.

RAYMONDE (leading him). Nothing to worry about?

CHANDEBISE. No, no. It's something about insurance.

RAYMONDE (dryly). Ah? (To LUCIENNE.) Come, I think the whole thing is now clear. (They leave U L.)

CHANDEBISE (to FINACHE). My dear fellow, women are really astonishing. You will never guess what has happened.

FINACHE. What?

(TOURNEL appears at the door D L.)

TOURNEL. Chandebise, am I to wait here all day with these papers?

CHANDEBISE. Come in, old man. Wait till you hear this.

TOURNEL (placing his papers on the table). What's going on? (To FINACHE.) Good morning, Doctor.

FINACHE. Good morning, Tournel.

CHANDEBISE. Brace yourselves. (Preparing his effect.) I have just acquired a mistress.

TOURNEL. You?

FINACHE. You?

CHANDEBISE. That amazes you, doesn't it? Hold on, I'm not inventing anything. (Reading, and putting a great deal of expression into each word.) "I am the one who couldn't take her eyes from you the other evening at the Palais-Royal."



TOURNEL. You?

FINACHE. You?

CHANDEBISE (with growing self-satisfaction). She didn't take her eyes off me.

TOURNEL. That's a good one.

CHANDEBISE. Thank you.

TOURNEL (taking the letter from his hands, and continuing reading). "You were in a loge with a lady and another gentleman."

CHANDEBISE. That's you, Tournel--the other gentleman. My turn now. (Grabbing the letter from him and reading.) "Some people near me pointed you out. Since then, I can dream only of you." She dreams only of me. (Digging TOURNEL in the ribs.) Eh, Tournel.

TOURNEL. I don't believe it.

CHANDEBISE (as he shows the letter). Read it.

FINACHE (consulting the evidence). Yes, indeed -- it's all there.

TOURNEL. My God! How amazing. (To FINACHE.) Don't you think so?

FINACHE. She dreams only of him.

TOURNEL. Indigestion can cause anything.

CHANDEBISE. Listen here, you!

TOURNEL. I'm joking.

CHANDEBISE (pursuing his reading). "I am prepared for a wild, foolish fling. Are you?" Her timing is perfect, eh, Finache?

FINACHE. Why so?

CHANDEBISE. Come now, after what I told you a little while ago?

FINACHE. Nonsense.

CHANDEBISE (reading). "I will be waiting for you today at five o'clock at the Hotel Pussycat."

FINACHE. The Hotel Pussycat! There's a little lady who knows her way about.

CHANDEBISE. Why? Is this hotel----

FINACHE. A perfect dream, dear fellow.

CHANDEBISE. I've never heard of it.

FINACHE. Well, I'm sure that Tournel----

TOURNEL. I know it by name, that's all.

CHANDEBISE. My friends--look at this----

FINACHE and TOURNEL. What?

CHANDEBISE. She cried.

TOURNEL and FINACHE. Who cried?

CHANDEBISE. She cried. Poor little soul. Look --she flooded the whole paper.

TOURNEL (sniffing the letter). Great heavens!

What made her tears smell so strong?

FINACHE. Shh. Tears have their secret--their mystery. Let us respect this secret.

CHANDEBISE. Go ahead. Make a joke of it! You see, Tournel, I also make--friends. While we were there, at the Palais-Royal, not suspecting a thing, a woman was gazing at me, passionately.

TOURNEL. If we're to believe the letter.

CHANDEBISE (to TOURNEL, hopefully). Did you notice a woman was making eyes at me.?

TOURNEL. Now that I think of it--there was perhaps a lady who--but no. I thought she was looking at me.

CHANDEBISE. Really? (Pause.) You? (Brusquely.) How stupid can I be? Of course.

TOURNEL and FINACHE. What?

CHANDEBISE. I wasn't the one that struck her eye. It was you.

TOURNEL. Me?

CHANDEBISE. She took you for me, because they mentioned my name. She was really looking at you all the time.

TOURNEL (puffing up). You think so?

CHANDEBISE. Of course.

TOURNEL. Perhaps, yes. It's possible.



CHANDEBISE. Look at me! Am I capable of inspiring such love? No. While you--it's very natural. You always turn women's heads. You're handsome.

TOURNEL (very flattered, defending himself out of graciousness). Come now, come now.

CHANDEBISE. There's no more mystery.

FINACHE. You can't know for sure.

TOURNEL. I suppose I have a certain charm.

CHANDEBISE (to FINACHE). There you have it.

He has charm. Women commit suicide over him. (To TOURNEL.) Is it true, yes, or no?

TOURNEL (very modestly). Only an attempt----

CHANDEBISE. Even an attempt----

TOURNEL. She tried to poison herself.

FINACHE. How?

TOURNEL. She ate oysters out of season.

CHANDEBISE and FINACHE. Oysters?

TOURNEL. She was desperate.

CHANDEBISE. There's no question about it. This letter is in my name, but it is really for you.

Therefore, Tournel, you will go to the Hotel Pussycat.

TOURNEL (without conviction). Oh, no, no.

CHANDEBISE. Besides, I can't go. I'm having dinner with our American director today.

TOURNEL. Really, Chandebise, I couldn't possibly.

CHANDEBISE. You're dying to go.

TOURNEL. You think so?

CHANDEBISE. Of course, look at your nose. It's twitching.

TOURNEL (squinting, as he tries to see the end of his nose). You're right, and I accept.

CHANDEBISE (poking him amiably in the back). Ah, you rake, you!

TOURNEL. Actually, I was on the verge of having an adventure of this sort--but it's been --

postponed.

CHANDEBISE. With whom?

TOURNEL. I can't tell you.

CHANDEBISE (to FINACHE, while he imitates

TOURNEL). He can't tell me! (To TOURNEL.)

You devil, you!

TOURNEL. Your unknown lady will serve nicely--in the interim.

CHANDEBISE. Very happy to be of service.

TOURNEL. You couldn't be more gracious. (Without any transition.) All right, give me the letter.

CHANDEBISE. You don't need it. Just go to the hotel and ask for the room in my name. I don't receive letters like this very often. My grandchildren, supposing that I have any, will find it among my papers. They'll say to themselves, "Grandfather must have been quite a man, to arouse such passion." At least I'll be handsome for my posterity. Come, Doctor--you may listen to my heart.

TOURNEL. And what about these papers?

CHANDEBISE. Two minutes, and I'll be with you. Come on, Finache. Let's go upstairs where we won't be disturbed.

FINACHE. Just as you say. (CHANDEBISE and FINACHE go upstairs.)

TOURNEL (his papers in his hand, grumbling).

Two minutes! After that it will be something else. (Smiling complacently.) Hotel Pussycat. I wonder who she is.

(RAYMONDE, her hat on her head, comes in from U L.)

RAYMONDE. M. Chandebise isn't here?

TOURNEL. He's with the doctor. I can call him.



RAYMONDE. Oh, no. Don't disturb him. If you see him in a little while, tell him that I went out with Mme. Histangua and I shall probably be out until quite late.

TOURNEL. He said that he'd be dining with his Director from America.

RAYMONDE. That's what he said? Well, it's false. The banquet is tomorrow. I have seen the invitation.

TOURNEL. Then he has the wrong day. I'll go and tell him. (He starts to go.)

RAYMONDE (stopping him). No, no, it's not a mistake. It's intentional. It's an alibi. He'll come back saying that he was confused about the date. But I know exactly what's going on.

TOURNEL (wishing to repair his mistake). I assure you. He was perfectly sincere. He has no reason to make up stories.

RAYMONDE. What stories has he been telling?

TOURNEL. None. Wait. You're making me say things that I don't want to say.

RAYMONDE. Oh, I understand your little game, too. You are trying to persuade me that he's a faithful husband, so I'll have time for a little interlude with you.

TOURNEL. But I assure you, I am speaking very sincerely.

RAYMONDE. Well, go drown yourself sincerely. (She goes out U L.)

TOURNEL. Go and drown myself?

(CAMILLE comes down the stairs with a glass filled with water and a little package of boric acid.)

CAMILLE. Monsieur Tournel. Well, are you in better humor now?

TOURNEL (in the same manner as Raymonde).

Go and drown yourself. (As he speaks, he goes out D L.)

CAMILLE (a moment motionless; then). What's the matter with him? (He goes up to the table, then places his glass in front of him on the table, opens the little package of boric acid and empties it into the glass. He holds the silver palate a moment above the glass like the Host above the chalice, then with love, he says:) Drench, dear palate. Drench yourself. (The palate falls into the glass, which he puts on top of the chiffonier.)

(ETIENNE enters U R.)

ETIENNE (announcing). Señor Homenides de Histangua.

(HOMENIDES enters, a good-looking Spanish gentleman of middle age who carries himself very tall. He speaks in the stilted fashion of someone who does not completely understand what is to him a foreign language.)

HOMENIDES. Greetings.

CAMILLE (bowing). Monsieur de Histangua.

HOMENIDES. And Monsieur Chandebise? Isn't he here yet?

CAMILLE. Yes, yes. My cousin will be with you immediately. He is busy with the doctor.

HOMENIDES. Ah, *bueno, bueno*.

(At this moment, FINACHE and CHANDEBISE appear on the stairs.)

CAMILLE. Yes, here they are.



FINACHE. There's nothing more to do other than what I told you.

CHANDEBISE. Fine.

HOMENIDES. Dear friend.

CHANDEBISE. Why, hello! How is everything?

HOMENIDES. *Bueno*, and the Doctor also? Your health is good?

FINACHE. Yes, thank you. Excuse me, but I was just leaving. *Au revoir*.

CHANDEBISE, CAMILLE and HOMENIDES.  
*Au revoir*.

FINACHE (as he goes). And for anyone who is going, happy Hotel Pussycat.

CAMILLE (pirouetting around on his heels). Idiot! Idiot! (He disappears D L.)

HOMENIDES. My lady? Is she here?

CHANDEBISE (nodding). With my wife.

HOMENIDES. Yes, I thought so. She told me she was going in front of me.

CHANDEBISE (who does not understand). In front of you? You mean before you.

HOMENIDES. That's the same thing.

CHANDEBISE. Yes, yes, of course. Do you want me to tell her?

HOMENIDES. No, I shall see her in a little while.

Ah, Chandebise, I was to your company this morning. I saw him, your doctor.

CHANDEBISE. Yes, that's what he told me.

HOMENIDES. Yes, he made me urinary.

CHANDEBISE. Urinary?

HOMENIDES. Pee, pee.

CHANDEBISE (understanding). Yes, of course.

HOMENIDES. Why did he do that?

CHANDEBISE. Do what?

HOMENIDES. Make me urinary.

CHANDEBISE. Heavens, to know if you are in good health and can be insured.

HOMENIDES. But I'm not being insured. It's my wife.

CHANDEBISE (nonplused). Eh? You hadn't told me that.

HOMENIDES. I told you I want to ask you for insurance, but you didn't ask me for whom.

CHANDEBISE (jovially). Well, that's a little misfortune that can be easily repaired. Mme.

Homenidès has only to go to the company and----

HOMENIDES. And what? Will you have the same thing done with her?

CHANDEBISE. Naturally.

HOMENIDES (raising his voice). I don't want it! I don't want it!

CHANDEBISE. Be reasonable. That's the rule.

HOMENIDES (speaking right into Chandebise's face). I break the rules! I have done the urinary for her.

CHANDEBISE. That's not allowed.

HOMENIDES. *Bueno*. She will not be insured.

CHANDEBISE. You can't be that jealous.

HOMENIDES. It's not jealousy. I find it inferior to her dignity. I'm not jealous.

CHANDEBISE (wishing to be gracious). Of course not. Mme. de Histangua is a model wife.

HOMENIDES. She'd better be.

CHANDEBISE. Oh?

HOMENIDES (taking a revolver from his pocket, which he aims at CHANDEBISE). You see this little knickknack?

CHANDEBISE (protecting himself instinctively).

Come now! You shouldn't play with things like that!

HOMENIDES (shrugging his shoulders). There's no danger. It's only a toy.

CHANDEBISE (little reassured). Yes, of course.

HOMENIDES (clenching his teeth). If I were to catch her with a gentleman--ah ha. The gentleman,



he would receive a bullet in the back, which would come out the back.

CHANDEBISE (bewildered). How could it come out his back?

HOMENIDES. Her back!

CHANDEBISE. Ah. Yes, because you suppose that----

HOMENIDES. What? I suppose what?

CHANDEBISE (wishing to avoid making him angry). Nothing, nothing.

HOMENIDES (calmer). I warned her--I warned her on our wedding night.

CHANDEBISE. Charming declaration.

HOMENIDES (putting his revolver in his pocket). She wouldn't tempt fate--or me.

CHANDEBISE. All right. I'll speak to the doctor. Perhaps the test can be waived.

(TOURNEL appears at the door D L.)

TOURNEL. Well, let's get on with it, old fellow.

CHANDEBISE. One moment, one moment.

TOURNEL. If you'll remember, I have an appointment to keep.

CHANDEBISE. Right away. Prepare the papers. I'll be with you in a second.

TOURNEL (annoyed). All right. (Goes out again.)

HOMENIDES. Who is this man?

CHANDEBISE. Monsieur Tournel.

HOMENIDES. Tournel?

CHANDEBISE. A friend, who is also an agent of the company.

HOMENIDES. Ah.

CHANDEBISE. A charming boy, Monsieur Tournel, but such a ladies' man.

HOMENIDES (with indulgence). Ah!

CHANDEBISE. He's in a hurry to go away because--there is a woman waiting for him.

HOMENIDES (laughing). Ha, ha.

CHANDEBISE (with a little self-conceit). I say "who is waiting for him," but perhaps it is I she awaits. Not likely--but perhaps. (Takes the letter out of his pocket and caresses it.) Anyway, it's to me that she addressed a letter--a perfumed letter, boiling with love.

HOMENIDES (interested). Who is this woman?

CHANDEBISE. It's not signed.

HOMENIDES (profoundly). Some anonymous person, perhaps?

CHANDEBISE. Obviously a woman of the world, possibly a married woman.

HOMENIDES. What makes you think so?

CHANDEBISE. The style, the tone. Look at this. (Hands letter to HOMENIDES.)

HOMENIDES (laughing, as he takes the letter). Then there must be some old----(He puts his index fingers on his head in the position of horns, and wiggles them, indicating a cuckold.)

CHANDEBISE. That makes you laugh?

HOMENIDES. Oh, that amuses me.

CHANDEBISE. Bad boy.

HOMENIDES (looking over the letter and suddenly crying out). *Caramba!*

CHANDEBISE (bewildered). What?

HOMENIDES (bursting out and walking up and down the stage with long strides). *Hija de la perra que te pario.*

CHANDEBISE. What's the matter with you?

HOMENIDES. I recognize this handwriting. Yes! Absolutely! (Furiously.) This is the handwriting of my wife.

CHANDEBISE (jumping). What are you saying?



HOMENIDES (bounding on him). Miserable scum!  
 CHANDEBISE (trying to free himself). Wait! Stop!  
 HOMENIDES (holding him by the throat with one hand, looking for his revolver with the other). My bulldog! Where's my bulldog?

CHANDEBISE (looking instinctively on the ground). What bulldog? Your dog?

HOMENIDES (pulling his revolver from his pocket). Here!

CHANDEBISE (at the sight of the revolver leveled at him). Histangua--listen--listen to me!

HOMENIDES (trying to hold CHANDEBISE with one hand and load his revolver with the other). She wrote to you.

CHANDEBISE (freeing himself and running upstage). Of course not. Of course not. It's surely not your wife. All women have the same handwriting today.

HOMENIDES. I recognize it!

CHANDEBISE. I can't help it. I didn't do anything. Besides I'm not going to meet anyone.

HOMENIDES. Who is going? (Gestures with revolver.)

CHANDEBISE (terrified). Tournel.

HOMENIDES. The man who was here just a moment ago? *Bueno*. I'll kill him.

CHANDEBISE (going to the door D L). But nothing has happened. I'll explain to Tournel, and everything will be all right.

HOMENIDES (who runs ahead of CHANDEBISE to block his path). I forbid you. I want the thing consummated. I will have the proof and I will kill.

CHANDEBISE (trying to calm him). Please, Histangua, please.

(At this moment, in the wings, the voices of

LUCIENNE and RAYMONDE are heard.)

HOMENIDES (pushing CHANDEBISE toward closet door, as he menaces him with the revolver).

I hear the voice of my wife. Enter here.

CHANDEBISE. Histangua! My friend!

HOMENIDES (fiercely). I am your friend, but I will kill you like a dog!

CHANDEBISE. Please, Histangua, listen.

HOMENIDES. Go, go, or I will fire!

CHANDEBISE (not waiting to hear the same thing said twice). No. No. (He enters the closet.)

HOMENIDES (turning the key, then wiping off his forehead). *Que lastima----*

(LUCIENNE enters U L, followed by RAYMONDE.)

LUCIENNE (to HOMENIDES). Ah! You are here, *Cherie*.

HOMENIDES (forcing himself to appear calm). Yes, I am here. (Ominously.) I am here.

RAYMONDE (passing in front of LUCIENNE to go to HOMENIDES). Good day, Monsieur de Histangua.

HOMENIDES. Good day, madame. How are you, and your husband?

RAYMONDE. Thank you.

HOMENIDES. And the children?

RAYMONDE. I don't have any.

HOMENIDES. What a pity. Some other time.

RAYMONDE (laughing). Of course, of course.

LUCIENNE (who has been looking at him for a moment). What's the matter with you?

HOMENIDES (containing his anger). Nothing's the matter with me. Why?

LUCIENNE (little convinced). If you say so. Well, I'm going out with Raymonde. You don't need me?



HOMENIDES. No, no. Go, I beg of you, go.

LUCIENNE. All right. *Au revoir*.

RAYMONDE. *Au revoir*, monsieur.

HOMENIDES (who is beginning to fall into a rage).  
*Au revoir*, madame, *au revoir*.

LUCIENNE (who wants the thing brought to light).  
*Que tienes, querido mio. Que te pasa por que  
me pones una cara asi?*

HOMENIDES (becoming more nervous). *Te aseguro  
no tengo nada.*

LUCIENNE. *Ah, Dios. Que caracter tan insoportable  
tienes.* (The women go out U R.)

HOMENIDES (as soon as they have gone, bursting  
out). *Sin verguenza! Oh, la garrona!* (He has  
arrived at the closet. There is a drumming on  
the door and he bounds over.) Enough there,  
or I'll fire. (The noise stops. He walks back  
nervously.)

(TOURNEL enters D L.)

TOURNEL (to HOMENIDES). Where did M. Chande-  
bise go now?

HOMENIDES (to himself, grinding his teeth). Ah,  
ha. Now it's the other. (Out loud, with a vi-  
cious smile.) He's not here.

TOURNEL (without noticing Homenidès' state). If  
you see him, be kind enough to tell him that I  
left the papers on the desk, and he has only to  
take down the names.

HOMENIDES (facing TOURNEL). Yes, sir, yes.

TOURNEL. As for me, I can't wait any longer. I  
have an important appointment.

HOMENIDES (nervous in spite of his affected calm  
and graciousness). That's right. Go. Go.

TOURNEL (astonished). What?

HOMENIDES (getting angry). Go! Or I will----

TOURNEL. Or what?

HOMENIDES (mastering himself immediately). Noth-  
ing at all, sir. Nothing at all. (And he says,  
very charmingly:) Go, go.

TOURNEL. What a strange individual. (Turning  
around and bowing.) Monsieur. (He leaves.  
HOMENIDES wipes his brow, takes the glass  
in which Camille's palate has been soaking,  
and drains it.)

HOMENIDES. Ah, that's much better. (Suddenly  
he realizes that something is wrong.) Ugh.  
What did they put into that? (He puts the  
glass down on the table in disgust.)

(CAMILLE enters D L.)

CAMILLE. Monsieur de Histangua. All alone?

HOMENIDES (bounding toward him). You arrived  
just in time. I was going.

CAMILLE. Going?

HOMENIDES. When I shall have left--(Indicating the  
closet door.)--through that door, go. I author-  
ize you. Open, for your master. Go. (Speak-  
ing, he takes him by the back of his coat and  
pushes him toward the closet door.)

CAMILLE (bewildered). What? Open a door?

HOMENIDES. *Sin verguenza. Como podria imagin-  
arone que mi mujer tuviese un amante.* (He  
goes out main door U R.)

CAMILLE (very bewildered, half mocking and half  
imitating him). *Que mi mujer tuviese un amante.*  
(Laughing.) I don't understand a word he said.  
(Going toward the closet door.) For my master.  
What master? (He unlocks and opens the door.)  
You?



CHANDEBISE (still transfixed with fear, not daring to enter the room). Has he left?

CAMILLE. Who?

CHANDEBISE (still in the doorway of the closet).  
Homenidès.

CAMILLE. Yes.

CHANDEBISE (in the same way). And Mme.  
Homenidès?

CAMILLE. Also, with Raymonde.

CHANDEBISE. Good, then. And Tournel?

CAMILLE. He just left.

CHANDEBISE. He just left? My God! We haven't  
a moment to lose. Whom can we send to warn  
them? Ah, Etienne.

CAMILLE. Where?

CHANDEBISE. Let's get moving. (Taking CAMILLE  
by the lapels of his coat.) My dear boy. We are  
sitting on a volcano. There's going to be a ter-  
rible tragedy. Perhaps a double assassination.

CAMILLE (jumping). What are you talking about?

CHANDEBISE. I have just enough time before the  
banquet to run to Tournel's house. My hat!  
Where's my hat?

CAMILLE. What's going on here?

CHANDEBISE (rapidly). I haven't time to explain.  
If Tournel comes back here, tell him that he  
mustn't go to the rendezvous. His life is at  
stake.

CAMILLE. Tournel's life is at stake?

CHANDEBISE. Do you understand me? His life!

CAMILLE. Yes, yes, his life.

CHANDEBISE. My God, what a tragedy! What a  
tragedy! (He leaves D L.)

CAMILLE. What in the name of God is going on  
here today? What's the matter with all of  
these people?

(TOURNEL hurries in U R.)

TOURNEL. I left my bag.

CAMILLE. Tournel!

TOURNEL (taking his bag off the table). Ah, here  
it is.

CAMILLE (jumping toward him). Don't go where you  
were going. Your life is at stake.

TOURNEL. What?

CAMILLE (holding on to him). Don't go to the rendez-  
vous, to the rendezvous, don't go. Your life is  
at stake.

TOURNEL (pushing him off and going U R). Leave  
me alone. I don't understand anything you are  
saying.

CAMILLE (regaining his equilibrium and running  
after him). Tournel! Tournel!

TOURNEL. The devil with you! Good evening. (He  
leaves rapidly.)

CAMILLE (running to the chiffonier and looking for the  
glass). My God! My palate! Where did they  
put my palate? (Noticing the glass on the table.)  
Ah, there it is. (He puts the palate in his  
mouth and runs toward the door.) Tournel!  
Tournel!

(CHANDEBISE reenters, his hat on his head.)

CHANDEBISE. Who are you shouting at?

CAMILLE (at the door--with perfect enunciation).

I tried to tell him what you told me. I tried  
to stop him. He wouldn't listen to me and now  
he's run off to the rendezvous to get himself  
killed. I must catch him. I must!

CHANDEBISE (falling into a chair). My God! He  
speaks!



CAMILLE (running and calling out as the curtain falls). Tournel! Wait! Tournel! Tournel!

CURTAIN

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## ACT TWO

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SCENE: The second floor of the Hotel Pussycat. The decor is ornate, with mirrors, red plush and gilt. The stage is divided in two. At the R, occupying nearly three-fifths of the stage, is a large hall. One enters through swinging doors which supposedly hide a stairway. The visible stairway goes to the floors above. In the foreground, at R, are the reception desk and a coat rack on which are hung a doorman's jacket and cap. To the left of the stairway is a corridor leading to the interior of the hotel. There are three doors giving directly into the hall. One leads to a room which is visible to the audience and occupies stage L. The second door leads to a contiguous room directly behind, which, of course, is not visible to the audience. The third leads to Albicocco's room, also not visible to the audience. In the room at L are a canopied bed on a platform, a fireplace, a window, and a door or passageway D L leading to a bathroom. On both sides of the bed, black pushbuttons are mounted on white lacquered wood like large targets. These buttons are supposed to cause the bed from the front room to change places with the bed behind it. The platform holding the beds should turn like a lazy Susan. The same effect can be achieved without the revolving platform through the use of



blackouts. See production notes.

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: EUGENIE, the maid, is dusting the room at L C. FERRAILLON, a squat little man who carries his former chest and now belly prominently and proudly, is in the hall.

FERRAILLON. Eugenie. (EUGENIE keeps flicking her feather duster.)

EUGENIE. Sir?

FERRAILLON (from the threshold). What are you doing?

EUGENIE. Just finishing the room, sir.

FERRAILLON (entering the room). You should be finished already and working downstairs.

EUGENIE. Monsieur?

FERRAILLON. *Sacre Dieu!* You call this room clean? And that bed? It looks already slept in.

EUGENIE. And well it might.

FERRAILLON (offended). Why don't you just say you think my hotel is a place where----

EUGENIE (quickly). I'd never say such a thing.

FERRAILLON. This is a deluxe hotel, where only married people come.

EUGENIE. But never together.

FERRAILLON. It's not up to you to judge my guests. Besides, they are doubly married, each one on his own side.

EUGENIE. That kind of hotel.

FERRAILLON. The kind of hotel that has well-made beds and maids who work instead of talk. Now redo this bed and be quick about it. (He throws back the covers.)

EUGENIE (defiantly). If I'm supposed to be downstairs already, I haven't time. (She pushes the

button beside the bed and the platform revolves, carrying the bed from the contiguous room into view.) I'll revolve these beds and make that one later.

(BAPTISTIN, an old hang-dog of a man in night shirt and cap, is in the bed that has arrived.)

BAPTISTIN. Oh, my rheumatism.

EUGENIE. Oh, my goodness!

FERRAILLON. Uncle! What are you doing in bed at this hour? Are you drunk again?

BAPTISTIN. My rheumatism.

FERRAILLON. Your so-called rheumatism comes from bistros. (A sermon.) All bistros should be closed in the name of public morality! Now go back and sleep it off. (He pushes button and as bed revolves, he calls after BAPTISTIN.) I can't have you lying around here drunk. The Hotel Pussycat is a respectable hotel.

EUGENIE. If this is such a respectable place as you keep proclaiming, what is the purpose of having beds that revolve from one room to the next?

FERRAILLON. An embarrassing situation can develop in any hotel. In the Hotel Pussycat the embarrassment can be resolved--(Making revolving gesture.)--away into the next room.

EUGENIE (to audience, archly). What an extraordinary convenience.

FERRAILLON. Your job is to make beds--not comments. (He exits to hall.)

(OLYMPE has appeared from the corridor carrying a pile of sheets. She is a formerly pretty woman who has not given up--a young-looking fifty.



very closely corseted, very much made up, and wearing a lot of jewelry.)

OLYMPE. Who are you after now, Ferrailon?  
(She puts the sheets on the desk at R.)

FERRAILLON. That useless housemaid. I wish I'd had her under me in the regiment.

OLYMPE (severely). Ferrailon!

(ALBICOCCO, a Sicilian gentleman who speaks only Italian, and that in a vigorous way, comes out of his room.)

ALBICOCCO. *Nessuna chiamata?*

FERRAILLON (pivoting around). What?

ALBICOCCO (gesticulating). *Nessuna chiamata?*  
(FERRAILLON and OLYMPE look at each other, bewildered.)

ALBICOCCO (gently, to OLYMPE). *Per favore-- nessuna chiamata?*

OLYMPE. No. *Nessuna*, sir.

ALBICOCCO. *Miseria--grazie lo stesso.* (He goes back to his room, downhearted.)

FERRAILLON. What did he say?

OLYMPE. I think he asked if someone had come.

FERRAILLON. Why does he have this mania to speak in Italian?

OLYMPE. That's all he knows. Poor thing. Every time he comes, his lady friend makes him wait.

FERRAILLON. I can understand why, too. (Mimicking him.) "*Nessuna chiamata?*"

OLYMPE (laughing). I have to take my sheets to the laundry room.

FERRAILLON. *Cherie*, you're my wife, not a workhorse. (Calling.) Eugenie! (EUGENIE, who has made the bed over, opens the door.)

EUGENIE. Sir?

FERRAILLON. Take that pile of sheets to the laundry room.

EUGENIE (to herself). This is a job for a donkey.  
(She picks up the sheets.)

OLYMPE (indicating the room in the foreground L). Number five has been reserved by M. Chandebise. (To EUGENIE.) You remember?

EUGENIE. Yes, madame. The gentleman who speaks that way. (She pronounces 'who speaks that way' in the manner of Camille.)

OLYMPE. That's him. He sent a telegram saying to reserve for five o'clock, the same room as last time. He had number five last time.

EUGENIE (as she goes upstairs). Number five is all made up.

FERRAILLON (to OLYMPE). Tell Poche to bring some----Where is Poche?

OLYMPE. He's in the cellar, packing up the wood.

FERRAILLON. In the cellar? Are you crazy? I tell you he drinks too much, and you send him to the cellar.

OLYMPE. The wine is padlocked on the racks, for heaven's sakes.

FERRAILLON. You don't know that old rascal the way I do. He told me he'd given up drinking, but I believe that the way I believe I'm twenty-four. I never saw him sober during the whole three years he worked for me in the regiment.

OLYMPE. Maybe the military life was too much for him.

FERRAILLON (with relish). Back in the service, I could push him about--really abuse him. What a joy. I'd give him a good kick, and he'd cry so piteously and stand right still. I gave him some of my finest beatings.



OLYMPE (her head against Ferrailon's shoulder and her eyes on the heavens). You beat so beautifully.

FERRAILLON (modestly). Yes. I used to be a good beater. Now, well, we all get tired. However, Poche is a servant of the old school. Not like the servants of today, that you have to speak softly to. What luck to have found him again.

(At this moment, coming up from below, POCHE appears. He is in work clothes and unkempt, but an exact copy of M. Chandebise. However, he appears a thick-headed specimen. He carries a telegram.)

FERRAILLON (upon seeing POCHE). Well, well, speak of the devil! What's the matter, Poche?

POCHE (vaguely imitating a military salute, and in a very drawling voice). A telegram, commander.

FERRAILLON (grabbing the telegram from Poche's hand). Thank you. (Seeing that POCHE is looking at him tenderly.) My God! But the dog is ugly! Have you finished looking at me like that, you imbecile? (He opens the telegram.) It's another one from Chandebise. "Reserve good room for me."

OLYMPE (with a point of irony). He really means it. She must be quite special.

FERRAILLON. "And admit anyone who speaks for it in my name." (To POCHE.) Did you hear that? If any one asks for the room reserved for M. Chandebise, it's this one. (He indicates the room at L.)

POCHE (sanctimonious smile, military salute). Yes, commander.

FERRAILLON. All right, you may go. (POCHE

remains where he is, contemplating FERRAILLON.) What an idiot. (Taking him by the arm and spinning him around.) Get out now! Take off! (He kicks him. POCHE radiantly climbs the stairs, his eyes on FERRAILLON.) He loves it. I tell you, he adores me, that animal. (Raising his voice.) Will you please get out of here? *Allez-vite*. (POCHE obeys with precipitation and almost falls on the top steps.)

OLYMPE (once POCHE has disappeared). He is, nevertheless, a good man.

(ALBICOCCO has come out of his room quietly and come up behind FERRAILLON.)

ALBICOCCO. *Nessuna chiamata?*

FERRAILLON (spinning around). What?

ALBICOCCO. *Senta, è la seconda volta che le chiedo --nessuna chiamata per me?*

FERRAILLON. No, *nessuno*, dammit.

ALBICOCCO. *Beh--grazie*. (He goes back into his room.)

FERRAILLON. Why does he come out of that room like a jack-in-the-box?

(FINACHE comes up from below.)

FINACHE. Good day, colonel.

FERRAILLON and OLYMPE. Ah, Doctor.

FINACHE. Good day, Madame Ferrailon. Have you a room for me?

OLYMPE. We always have a room for you, Doctor.

FINACHE. Nobody came to ask for me?

FERRAILLON. Not yet, Doctor.

FINACHE. So much the better.

OLYMPE. It's a whole month since we've seen the



Doctor.

FINACHE. I have been here and there.

FERRAILLON. That's bad, you know, not to be faithful.

FINACHE. But it's always with the same lady.

FERRAILLON. I'm not speaking of the lady. I'm speaking of the hotel.

FINACHE (laughing). My dear sir. If you wish fidelity in all things, you will have to close your hotel.

FERRAILLON. Just so, Doctor. Very amusing.

FINACHE. I didn't see your boy at the desk.

OLYMPE. Poche?

FINACHE. Gabriele--the handsome Gabriele.

FERRAILLON. We sent him away. Too much of a decoration.

OLYMPE. He was making too many conquests among the guests.

FINACHE. Well, well.

FERRAILLON. The whole thing was unacceptable.

A gentleman brought his mistress here, at the risk of having her stolen away by the hotel porter. That did not inspire confidence in our hotel.

FINACHE. I should think not.

FERRAILLON. Also, there must be discipline. I was in the regiment, you know.

FINACHE. You really were a colonel?

FERRAILLON. A sergeant-major in the 29th regiment. That is why they call me colonel.

FINACHE. Yes, yes. You're a colonel in civilian life.

FERRAILLON. Why not? In private life, what's one rank, more or less? (To OLYMPE.)

*Cherie*, will you please go and see that number ten is ready for the doctor?

OLYMPE. Yes, of course, my dear. (She starts up the stairs.)

FINACHE. A wonderful woman, Mme. Ferrailлон.

FERRAILLON. And so serious.

FINACHE. I sometimes feel that I have seen her before.

FERRAILLON. Perhaps you have--she was quite renowned in her day. (Confidentially.) Did you ever hear of the beautiful underworld figure, Castana, nicknamed Leatherbritches?

FINACHE (questioning his memory). Castana? Wait a moment.

FERRAILLON. The long-time mistress of the Duke of Gennevilliers.

FINACHE. Who had herself served up on a silver platter one day at the Duke's palace--completely naked?

FERRAILLON. That's it. (With a certain satisfaction.) My wife. I married her.

FINACHE (a little disconcerted). My compliments.

FERRAILLON. She fell in love with me when I was a sergeant-major. I was a good-looking fellow then. And the uniform---She had a weakness for the military.

FINACHE. Leatherbritches?

FERRAILLON. She also had money, good health, and--a reputation. I proposed marriage.

FINACHE. Congratulations.

FERRAILLON (continuing). I laid down my conditions. I'm a man of principle. I said to her, from this moment on, no more running around. No more men. I don't know if you're like me, Doctor, but I feel that from the moment you get married, the woman should have no more lovers.

FINACHE (rather seriously). You're absolutely



right.

FERRAILLON. I insist on respectability. So there you have it. We opened the Hotel Pussycat, and now we live like any typical couple.

FINACHE. Typical.

OLYMPE (calling from the top of the stairs). The doctor may come and see the room now.

FINACHE (running upstairs two steps at a time). Good. Excuse me, will you, Ferrailon? If anyone asks for me, let me know right away, won't you? (He disappears.)

FERRAILLON (bowing, then looking after him). Ah, love--love.

(ALBICOCCO comes out of his room again.)

ALBICOCCO. *Nessuna chiamata?*

FERRAILLON. Not again!

ALBICOCCO. *Ho detto nessuna chiamata?*

FERRAILLON (with a smile and a mellow tone). You are a donkey.

ALBICOCCO. *Cosa?*

FERRAILLON. You are a sad donkey.

ALBICOCCO (who does not understand). Dankay?

FERRAILLON (in the most gracious way possible). I am sorry to take advantage of your ignorance, but I must tell you what I think of you. Donkey.

ALBICOCCO. Dankay--*grazie*.

FERRAILLON. At your service.

(ALBICOCCO starts toward his room when RAYMONDE enters, her face hidden by a thick veil.)

ALBICOCCO (who stops dead at the arrival of RAYMONDE). Oh----

FERRAILLON. Madame?

RAYMONDE. The room reserved by M. Chandebise.

FERRAILLON. Ah. yes----(Going to open the door of the room at L.) This way, madame.

(ALBICOCCO, who has not taken his eyes off RAYMONDE, advances toward her and, singing to himself "Mia bambina bella," begins to circle her. RAYMONDE looks at him, bewildered, and instinctively pivots around herself. ALBICOCCO realizes that RAYMONDE is not the lady that he was expecting.)

ALBICOCCO. *Non è la mia ragazza. Mi spiace.* (Gestures.) *Miseria.* (Bows and returns to his room.)

RAYMONDE (disconcerted). What's wrong with that fellow?

FERRAILLON. He's a crazy foreigner.

RAYMONDE. He's certainly forward. (Trying to put it casually.) Has anyone asked for the room? (She raises her veil a little.)

FERRAILLON. No, nobody. (Coming over to her.) My word. If I'm not mistaken, you are the lady who came this morning----Ah, madame, the Hotel Pussycat is flattered.

RAYMONDE (shocked). Don't you dare suppose that I----

FERRAILLON (immediately bowing). Excuse me, madame. (Going up to the door of the room and stepping back to allow RAYMONDE to pass in.) If you will please come this way. (Following her into the room.) Here is the room. The bed is very comfortable.

RAYMONDE (indignant). Sir!

FERRAILLON (disconcerted, as he walks toward



the bathroom D L). Here is the bathroom with hot water, cold water, tub, shower.

RAYMONDE (annoyed). I have no intention of living in this place.

FERRAILLON. Yes, madame. I understand.

RAYMONDE. Understand what?

FERRAILLON. Nothing. Nothing. (Pointing.) I must call Madame's attention to these buttons.

RAYMONDE. Please leave, sir.

FERRAILLON (disconcerted). But, madame, it is most important that you----

RAYMONDE. You may go.

FERRAILLON. Just as Madame says. (He walks to the door.) Madame, your humble servant. (He leaves.)

RAYMONDE. Good-by. Good-by.

FERRAILLON (as he closes the door). Ha, ho, that's a mistress who grinds her teeth.

RAYMONDE. That man is completely lacking in tact.

(POCHE is coming down the stairs with his empty wood carrier.)

FERRAILLON (noticing POCHE). Hey, Poche!

POCHE (saluting militarily). Commander.

FERRAILLON. When will you be finished?

POCHE. One more load, commander.

FERRAILLON. Hurry up, and then put on your uniform. You don't look respectable. (As he speaks, he indicates the uniform which is hanging on the coat rack.)

POCHE. Yes, commander, I mean, no commander. (There is a ringing of the bell.)

FERRAILLON. Somebody is ringing. It's the Italian. Go and see what he wants.

POCHE. Yes, commander. (He puts his wood car-

rier against the stairway and goes toward Albicocco's room without taking his eyes off FERRAILLON. He knocks on the door of the room. The voice of Albicocco, from inside;) ALBICOCCO. *Venga*. (POCHE enters Albicocco's room. RAYMONDE, during everything that preceded, has inspected the room and entered the bathroom D L, closing the door behind her.)

~~VI~~ (TOURNEL arrives on the scene.)

TOURNEL. Good day. M. Chandebise's room?

FERRAILLON. Yes, sir, but if I am not mistaken, you are not Monsieur Chandebise.

TOURNEL. I represent him.

FERRAILLON (with a nod). The telegram said to allow anyone in who asked for the room in his name. The lady is there, monsieur.

TOURNEL (with considerable interest). What's she like?

FERRAILLON (quite astonished). You want my opinion? It seems to me that since she pleases you----

TOURNEL. I don't know her.

FERRAILLON. Oh?

TOURNEL. She might be some old, ridiculous woman.

FERRAILLON. No, no, no. Rest assured, my friend. She may not be all sugar and spice, but she is pretty.

TOURNEL (nonchalantly). Character is not the question here.

FERRAILLON (with an approving laugh). No, indeed. Right this way, sir. (He enters the room, followed by TOURNEL.)



(POCHE comes out of Albicocco's room.)

POCHE. Yes, sir, right away. He wants a *nessuna chiamata*. I don't even know what that is.

(Shrugs.) I'll bring him a vermouth. (He takes his wood carrier and goes downstairs.)

FERRAILLON. Nobody here? (He knocks on the bathroom door.)

RAYMONDE. What is it?

FERRAILLON. Madame's gentleman is here.

RAYMONDE. All right.

FERRAILLON. Madame is there, sir.

TOURNEL. Very good.

FERRAILLON (as he leaves the room, whispering). Good luck, sir.

TOURNEL (closing the door after FERRAILLON, who subsequently goes upstairs.) Thank you. (Looking around him.) How nice. Well furnished, attractive. (He sees the buttons.) And if you got bored, at least you can do some target practice. (He mimics the action of firing a pistol.) I should introduce myself in some original way. Yes, yes. This will be amusing. (He sits on the bed and draws the curtains around so he is completely hidden.)

(RAYMONDE comes rushing out of the bathroom. She still has her hat on.)

TOURNEL (from inside the curtains). Cuckoo.

RAYMONDE (to herself). Cuckoo. What on earth?

TOURNEL. Cuckoo.

RAYMONDE. That's where he is. (Comes up to the bed, quickly draws aside the curtain and gives TOURNEL a violent blow.) Take that, you beast!

TOURNEL. Oh! (He jumps out of bed.)

RAYMONDE (jumping back). You're not my husband!

TOURNEL. Raymonde! It's you!

RAYMONDE (disconcerted). Monsieur Tournel!

TOURNEL (as he rubs his cheek). What an agreeable surprise.

RAYMONDE. What are you doing here?

TOURNEL. A drama of love, my dear. A woman fell in love with me at first sight and wrote me a piteous note. Out of kindness, I----

RAYMONDE. That's not true.

TOURNEL. But it is. I don't even know her. How could I love her, whereas you! (He tries to take her in his arms.) And here you are in front of me. Heaven must have a part in this.

RAYMONDE (freeing herself). The letter was not addressed to you. It was for my husband.

TOURNEL. How could a woman fall in love with him at first sight? He's very ugly, whereas I--(It is unnecessary, he feels, to mention his beauty.)--well--the letter was obviously meant for me.

RAYMONDE. The letter came from me!

TOURNEL (astonished). You write love letters to your husband?

RAYMONDE. I wanted to see if he was unfaithful.

TOURNEL. There! You see? You didn't want to be mine because you thought your husband was unfaithful. He can't be. He hasn't come!

RAYMONDE (struck by the argument). That's true.

TOURNEL. And when he received your letter, he said, "What does this lady want with me? Doesn't she know that I could never deceive my wife?"

RAYMONDE. He said that?

TOURNEL. Exactly.



RAYMONDE. But I have reason to believe----

TOURNEL (cutting in). If he was going to deceive you, he'd be here.

RAYMONDE (realizing). You're right.

TOURNEL. Of course, I'm right.

RAYMONDE. Tournel, I'm so happy, I'm so happy! (She throws herself around Tournel's neck and kisses him on both cheeks.)

TOURNEL (radiantly). Raymonde. My Raymonde. (His arm around her waist.) You should never have doubted him. (He kisses her greedily.) You realize now that he's always been faithful. (He keeps on kissing her.) Honest, loyal, trustworthy--and so there is no reason not to deceive him!

RAYMONDE (hugging him). Yes, yes. You are right. (She kisses him.) I was wrong. It was very nasty of me to have suspected him. My dear Chandebise, I should have trusted you. Please forgive me. (More kisses.)

TOURNEL (lyrically). No apologies are necessary. Be mine. That will suffice.

RAYMONDE (lyrically). Yes, yes. A suitable punishment.

TOURNEL (transported). Oh, Raymonde. I love you, love you, love you.

RAYMONDE. To think that I thought that it was my husband who was saying cuckoo----

TOURNEL. We will have it for him.

RAYMONDE. What?

TOURNEL. Cuckoo. (He hugs her.)

RAYMONDE (fighting to free herself). Tournel. Tournel! Please let me collect myself. (She frees herself.)

TOURNEL. *Au contraire* --let yourself go.

RAYMONDE. Tournel! See here!

TOURNEL. In moments like these, our sensations are much more intense. (Indicating bed.) Here, now. Come with me. Come.

RAYMONDE (bewildered). What are you doing? Where are you dragging me?

TOURNEL. Where happiness awaits us.

RAYMONDE. Are you crazy? (She gives him a push.) What do you take me for?

TOURNEL. But you led me to think----

RAYMONDE (with superb dignity). To be your lover, yes. But to go to bed with you, no. Do you take me for a woman of the streets?

TOURNEL (looking very pitiful). What did you have in mind?

RAYMONDE (lecturing). Like Dante and Beatrice--to love from afar--to speak tenderly with our eyes. I would give you the best part of myself.

TOURNEL. Which is?

RAYMONDE. My mind, my heart.

TOURNEL. You're not serious.

RAYMONDE. What did you have in mind?

TOURNEL (indignant). What every real man who loves a woman has in mind. It was meant to be, Raymonde. Events bring us together. Your husband himself throws me into your arms.

RAYMONDE. My husband?

TOURNEL. He sent me here. Resistance comes from you alone--(Trying to take her in his arms.)--and you are outnumbered.

RAYMONDE (freeing herself). Calm yourself!

TOURNEL (his voice rising). Calm myself! I will not calm myself. I will not flirt with just part of you, and, I might add, the least pertinent part.

RAYMONDE (who has backed away). Shame!



TOURNEL. What do you want me to do with your mind and your heart?

RAYMONDE. Stop talking like that.

TOURNEL. All right, I'll stop talking--(He takes her in his arms.)--and start teaching--the fundamentals of love.

RAYMONDE. My friend.

TOURNEL. Your dear friend--and you belong to me. (He tries to drag her to the bed. RAYMONDE succeeds in pushing him away, jumps quickly on the bed and places her finger on the button to the right of the bed.)

RAYMONDE. One step more, and I ring.

TOURNEL. Ring as much as you want. I'll lock the door.

(TOURNEL runs to the entrance door to push the bolt. RAYMONDE pushes the button. The platform revolves, RAYMONDE disappears with the bed, and BAPTISTIN arrives from the back room in the other bed.)

TOURNEL (triumphantly). She's mine. (He jumps on the bed.) Raymonde. My Raymonde.

BAPTISTIN. Rheumatism. My rheumatism!

TOURNEL. You're not Raymonde! (Jumps up.)

BAPTISTIN. No, I'm Baptistin.

TOURNEL. What are you doing? How did you get in here?

BAPTISTIN (sitting up). Eh?

TOURNEL. Where's Raymonde, where is she? (He runs over to open the door to the hall, calling.) Raymonde! Raymonde! There's nobody here. (He goes back into the room, leaving the door half opened, and then disappears into the bathroom.) Raymonde! Raymonde!

(RAYMONDE comes out of the room in the back L where the revolving platform had transported her.)

RAYMONDE. What happened? Where am I? Oh, my God! (Calling out.) Tournel! Tournel! (To herself.) I've had enough of this. I'm getting out of here. (She runs down the stairs.)

(Hardly has RAYMONDE disappeared, than ALBICOCCO erupts out of his room.)

ALBICOCCO. *Alo, cameriere.* (Not finding anyone.) *Nessuno qui.* (He walks toward desk.)

(RAYMONDE comes rushing in.)

RAYMONDE. My husband. My husband on the stairs! (Seeing Albicocco's door open, she runs into the room. ALBICOCCO looks at her for a moment, bewildered, then his face lights up and he runs after her.)

ALBICOCCO. *Che amore----Viva!* (He crosses the stage with long strides and enters his room, closing the door after him.)

(POCHE comes up the stairway, muttering.)

POCHE. Why am I so stupid? I'm looking for the vermuth downstairs when I gave it to Baptistin yesterday. (He walks toward the room in the back L.) Baptistin! Baptistin!

BAPTISTIN (calling from the bed). Here I am.

POCHE (at the door). There you are. Tell me, old man, what did you do with the vermuth?



BAPTISTIN. It's in the room next door, in the closet.

POCHE. Good. (He enters the room indicated.)

(TOURNEL comes out of the bathroom and walks out into the hall.)

TOURNEL. Nobody. Where is she? (He walks toward the stairs.)

(At this moment, RAYMONDE and ALBICOCCO come running out of Albicocco's room. RAYMONDE is struggling to free herself from Albicocco's embrace.)

ALBICOCCO. *Bambina, cara. Non lasciarmi--stai qui.*

RAYMONDE. Leave me alone. Will you please leave me alone? (Turning to the audience.) Everyone here is a satyr.

TOURNEL. There she is. (At this moment, RAYMONDE succeeds in pushing ALBICOCCO back, winds up and slaps him. TOURNEL, who appears between them, arrives just in time to receive the slap.) Again?

ALBICOCCO. *Grazie.*

TOURNEL (pushing RAYMONDE in the direction of the room). Good day, sir. (ALBICOCCO enters his own room, grumbling, while RAYMONDE, completely exhausted, has entered the other room, followed by TOURNEL.) Raymonde. Raymonde.

RAYMONDE. My friend. It's too much. My husband----

TOURNEL. Enough about your husband.

RAYMONDE. My husband is here.

TOURNEL (completely worn out). Again? (Suddenly understanding.) What? Chandeise?

RAYMONDE. Yes. Victor Emmanuel, disguised as a servant. To catch us, that's certain.

TOURNEL. That's not possible.

BAPTISTIN (from the bed). Oh, my rheumatism. My poor rheumatism.

RAYMONDE. My God!

TOURNEL. What?

RAYMONDE. Who is that?

TOURNEL. He's some sick person. All of a sudden he appeared. (To BAPTISTIN.) What are you doing here, you?

BAPTISTIN. You made me come.

TOURNEL. Me?

RAYMONDE. Get him out of here. Get him out of here.

TOURNEL (to BAPTISTIN). Get out! Get out of here!

BAPTISTIN. I'm the one who's sick! Press the button, I'll go back where I came from.

RAYMONDE. Tournel. Get that spectator out of here.

TOURNEL. Of course, right away. Sorry, old man. (He presses on the button.) My dear, it's not my fault. I assure you.

(While RAYMONDE and TOURNEL are discussing, the platform revolves and BAPTISTIN disappears. In his place is POCHE, seated on the side of the bed drinking a bottle of wine.)

POCHE. Now what?

RAYMONDE (jumping back). My God!

TOURNEL. Chandeise!

RAYMONDE. I am lost!



TOURNEL (going over rapidly to POCHE, who looks at them stupidly). My friend, are you going to believe me or what you see?

RAYMONDE. Mercy! Mercy! Don't condemn without hearing me.

POCHE (bewildered). Eh?

TOURNEL (with great emotion). Appearances condemn us, but I swear--we are not guilty.

RAYMONDE. Neither one of us thought of meeting the other here.

TOURNEL. It's the fault of that letter.

RAYMONDE. And I did it myself. I had the letter written----Forgive me. I thought you were deceiving me.

POCHE. Me?

RAYMONDE. Tell me that you believe me.

POCHE. Sure. All right. I believe you. (He laughs. To the audience.) What's the matter with them?

RAYMONDE. I beg of you, Victor Emmanuel, don't laugh like that. Please. Your laughter hurts me.

POCHE. My laugh?

RAYMONDE (tragically). I see that you don't believe me.

TOURNEL. But it's the gospel truth!

RAYMONDE. How can I convince you?

POCHE (suddenly getting up). Excuse me. I have to take this vermouth to the foreigner.

RAYMONDE. Victor Emmanuel. What is the matter with you?

POCHE (amazed). What's the matter with me?

TOURNEL. At such a tragic moment you speak to us of vermouth?

POCHE. He's waiting for it. Here, here's the bottle.

RAYMONDE. Enough of this. Insult me--beat me

if you wish--(She kneels.)--anything is better than this frightful sham.

POCHE. I assure you, madame----

RAYMONDE. I knew it! He calls me "madame."

POCHE. Me?

RAYMONDE (grabbing his hands). Call me "dear."

TOURNEL (also kneeling). In the name of God, man, call her "dear."

POCHE. Why not? (Getting on his knees to be at the same height as the others.) I mean, if you say so. But I assure you, madame----

TOURNEL. Not "madame." Call her Raymonde.

POCHE. I assure you, Raymonde----

RAYMONDE. Say that you believe me.

POCHE. I believe you.

TOURNEL. Thank God.

RAYMONDE. Then let's kiss and make up.

POCHE. What?

RAYMONDE. Kiss me, or I'll believe that you still suspect me.

POCHE. I'm willing. (Still on his knees, he wipes his lips with the back of his hand and without letting go of the bottle, he kisses RAYMONDE on both cheeks.)

RAYMONDE (kissing Poche's hands, her voice breaking). Oh, thank you. Thank you.

POCHE (licking his lips). You're quite welcome.

TOURNEL (who has gotten up). Me, too. Kiss me, too.

POCHE (standing up). Why not? (Kisses TOURNEL.)

TOURNEL. That's good.

POCHE. Yes. Especially the dame.

RAYMONDE. The dame?

POCHE (going toward the door). And now, I take the vermouth to the Italian.

TOURNEL. What's this joke?



RAYMONDE. Victor Emmanuel, are you my husband? Yes or no.

POCHE. Me? No. I'm Poche, the hotel porter.

TOURNEL. What?

RAYMONDE (hushed). My God, Victor Emmanuel has lost his mind.

POCHE. Not at all. My name is Poche. If you don't believe me, ask Baptistin. (He walks over toward the bed.)

RAYMONDE. Baptistin?

TOURNEL. Who's Baptistin?

POCHE. The old drunk--I mean--the sick old man. Wait a moment. (He presses the button to the left of the bed. The platform revolves.)

RAYMONDE. For heaven's sake.

(BAPTISTIN appears as the platform revolves. This time he is reading a newspaper.)

BAPTISTIN (from the bed). Oh, my rheumatism. My poor----

POCHE. Never mind that now. Tell me who I am.

BAPTISTIN. Don't you know?

POCHE. I know, yes, but this lady doesn't.

RAYMONDE. Yes. Who is this man?

BAPTISTIN. Why, he's Poche, of course.

TOURNEL and RAYMONDE. Poche!

BAPTISTIN. The porter.

POCHE. There, what did I tell you?

RAYMONDE. How could that possibly be true?

(FERRAILLON is coming down the stairs.)

FERRAILLON (from the stairway). Poche!

TOURNEL. Such a resemblance! It's unbelievable. I don't believe it. It's some kind of trick.

FERRAILLON (calling out). Poche! Poche!

POCHE. Commander! Please excuse me. The boss is calling me.

RAYMONDE. The concierge! We'll find out now. (She goes into the hall.)

TOURNEL (pushing by POCHE). Get out of my way.

RAYMONDE (to FERRAILLON). Sir! Sir!

FERRAILLON. Madame?

RAYMONDE. I beg of you, tell us who is this man? (She points to POCHE.)

FERRAILLON. His name is Poche, madame, the hotel porter.

POCHE (to RAYMONDE and to TOURNEL). There you are.

RAYMONDE and TOURNEL (completely befuddled). Poche?

FERRAILLON (bearing down on him). Poche! Here, and a bottle in his hand! (Grabbing him by the arm and giving him a kick.) Oh, you animal, idiot. *Cochon!* (At each kick he receives. POCHE jumps in the air as he cries out "oh." TOURNEL and RAYMONDE, who have been holding each other closely, shout "oh" as if they were receiving the kicks.)

POCHE (released by FERRAILLON, to RAYMONDE and TOURNEL). What did I tell you.

FERRAILLON (grabbing the wine bottle from Poche's hand). No more wine.

POCHE. But, boss. This is for the foreigner.

FERRAILLON. I'll give you something for the foreigner! (He continues to kick him.) That! and that! and that! (Pushes him toward corridor.) Now get out of here.

POCHE (taking off). Yes, boss. (As he exits, to the audience.) Now maybe they'll believe me.

FERRAILLON. Excuse me, sir. Excuse me,



madame. Our porter has taken a few drinks, I'm afraid. (He leaves.)

RAYMONDE (after some time, shaking her head). The porter! It was the porter.

TOURNEL. Raymonde.

RAYMONDE. What?

TOURNEL. We kissed the hotel porter.

RAYMONDE. I know.

TOURNEL. Such a resemblance. Impossible.

RAYMONDE. If I hadn't seen the concierge treat him like that, I might still have some doubt--but those kicks! Even to deceive me, Victor Emmanuel would never take those kicks in the----

TOURNEL (coldly). Back.

RAYMONDE. What emotion. My throat is dry. Water! Get me a little water!

TOURNEL (mechanically touching his pockets). Water? Water. Yes. Water. (Rapidly goes into room five.) Where is there water?

BAPTISTIN (looking up from his newspaper). In the bathroom.

TOURNEL. Thank you. (He goes into the bathroom.)

RAYMONDE (following TOURNEL into the bathroom, as she crosses to BAPTISTIN). Do you believe it? It was the hotel porter. (She enters the bathroom.)

BAPTISTIN. Life is full of surprises, madame. (Lies back on the bed, covering his face with the newspaper.)

(CAMILLE appears on the stairs, holding ANTOINETTE by the hand. He is wearing his palate and speaks clearly.)

CAMILLE. Ah, Antoinette, now that I have my silver palate, I can really speak to you at last. Come live with me and be my love--if but for an hour, my little dove. This is the hour of our delicious crime. They have a room reserved for us.

(POCHE comes from the corridor with a load of wood.)

POCHE. Sir?

CAMILLE. Victor Emmanuel! (He pivots and runs into the room at back L.)

ANTOINETTE. Sir! (She runs into Albicocco's room.)

POCHE (as he walks away). What is the matter with everyone today? (He goes upstairs.)

(RAYMONDE comes out of the bathroom, followed by TOURNEL.)

TOURNEL (to RAYMONDE). Better now?

RAYMONDE. Yes. No. I don't know. I feel weak. I may faint.

TOURNEL. Rest a moment. Here. Lie down on the bed. (Gently, and with deference, he leads her over to the bed.)

RAYMONDE (letting herself be led). Yes. I certainly won't object. (She falls on the bed.)

RAYMONDE and BAPTISTIN (shouting out together). Ah! (RAYMONDE jumps up.)

TOURNEL (to BAPTISTIN). It's you again.

BAPTISTIN (sitting up in the bed). You made me come.

RAYMONDE. This is too much. (Shaking TOURNEL.) Make him leave. Get him out of here.



TOURNEL (to BAPTISTIN). Go. Go back where you came from.

(TOURNEL presses the button and the beds revolve, bringing in CAMILLE.)

RAYMONDE. What a dreadful place. The rooms themselves are mad.

CAMILLE (hanging on to the bed, recognizing RAYMONDE and TOURNEL). Good God!

TOURNEL and RAYMONDE. Camille! (They start out of the room.)

CAMILLE. I'm sorry. The bed turned.

RAYMONDE (without stopping). It's not he! (He's speaking!)

TOURNEL (running behind RAYMONDE). He is speaking! Another impostor.

CAMILLE (getting off the bed and shouting after them). It was the bed that turned.

RAYMONDE (running toward the stairs). Let's get out of here.

TOURNEL. Quickly. (They disappear down the stairway.)

CAMILLE. Tournel and Raymonde! My God! If they recognized me! (He has arrived in the hall.) I'd better find Antoinette fast. (He goes into Albicocco's room.) Antoinette! (One hears a huge commotion: people arguing, furniture being turned over, glasses being broken. This noise does not stop during the following conversations.)

(RAYMONDE reappears, followed by TOURNEL.)

RAYMONDE. Etienne! Etienne here, too!

TOURNEL (running in after RAYMONDE). Your

butler! It's a nightmare! My God. (They both run down the corridor and disappear.)

(During this time, the terrible noise has increased in Albicocco's room. Brusquely, the door opens and CAMILLE is thrown out into the hall.)

ALBICOCCO. *Via! Via!*

CAMILLE (coming back to him). But, sir!

ALBICOCCO. *porco miseria.* (And he pushes CAMILLE in the face, causing him to spit out his palate.)

CAMILLE (speaking from then on as he did in the first act). My palate. I lost my palate. (He reaches down to pick it up.)

ALBICOCCO (seizing him around the middle and carrying him down to corridor). *Via, dico.*

CAMILLE (being carried away by ALBICOCCO). My palate! I want my palate! (ALBICOCCO returns without Camille and enters his own room.)

ALBICOCCO. *Hai mai visto un tale cafone. Sono io carrissima.*

(The door closes again, as ETIENNE comes up the stairs.)

ETIENNE. Isn't there anybody in this hotel? (He spies Camille's palate on the floor and pushes it with his foot.) What's this? Looks like jewelry. (Picks it up.) Slimy!

(EUGENIE arrives from downstairs.)

EUGENIE. May I help you, sir?



ETIENNE. Yes, miss. First, here is an *objet d'art* I just found on the floor here. (He gives her the palate.)

EUGENIE (examining it). It must be a piece of ancient jewelry. (She holds the palate against her uniform as she would a brooch.)

(During this time, CAMILLE has returned. He stoops over, searching the floor.)

CAMILLE. I must find it. I must find it. (He arrives at Etienne's leg, raises his head and recognizes the butler. Without standing up, he pivots around, scurries off.) Great God! Etienne! (He disappears down the corridor.)

EUGENIE (who, as well as ETIENNE, has not seen CAMILLE). I suppose some guest dropped it. I'll put it in the office.

ETIENNE. Tell me. Did a lady ask for M. Chande-bise's room?

EUGENIE. Yes.

ETIENNE. Where is she?

EUGENIE. Sir. I don't have the right.

ETIENNE (without emotion). Her husband is going to kill her.

EUGENIE. I see.

ETIENNE. It is absolutely necessary that I warn her.

EUGENIE. In that case! I saw her go in there. (She points out Albicocco's room.)

ETIENNE. Thank you. (He knocks on the door.)

ALBICOCCO. *Venga*. (ETIENNE enters the room.)

ETIENNE. Excuse me, sir.

ANTOINETTE and ALBICOCCO. Ah?

ETIENNE. My wife! (Immediately one hears a terrible racket in the room. Shouts, people

being pushed, falling furniture, breaking glasses.)

EUGENIE (who had gone back to the stairs). What on earth?

(ANTOINETTE rushes out of Albicocco's room, her clothes in disarray, her hair in disorder, and her hat in her hand, ETIENNE pursuing her. She rushes down the stairway.)

ANTOINETTE. Etienne! Etienne is here! Help! Help!

ETIENNE (after her). Stop her! Stop her!

(ALBICOCCO comes from his room.)

ALBICOCCO (grabbing him). *Scemo--ti amazzo. Porco cane*. (He hits ETIENNE, who cowers against the wall.)

ETIENNE. Ow!

EUGENIE. Ow!

ALBICOCCO. *Eccoti*.

ETIENNE. But that's my wife.

ALBICOCCO. *Via, via!* (He returns to his room.)

ETIENNE. That's a bit much. (To the audience.) I'm the one who's being deceived and I get the beating.

EUGENIE. If you had told me that you were the husband----

ETIENNE. I had no idea my wife would come to a place like this.

(EUGENIE shrugs her shoulders and goes toward the stairs, while POCHÉ comes down from upstairs, with his empty wood carrier.)

ETIENNE. The hussy. (He starts toward the



stairway and stops, bewildered, upon seeing  
POCHE.) Sir.

POCHE. What?

ETIENNE. Sir, what are you carrying?

POCHE. My wood carrier.

ETIENNE. I--a cuckold!

POCHE (jovially). You don't say.

ETIENNE (indicating Albicocco's room). And because of a foreigner.

POCHE. Ah--*nessuna chiamata*.

ETIENNE. He didn't tell me his name, but since you are here, perhaps you can warn Madame yourself. I have to catch my wife and beat the--pardon me, sir, out of her. Will you permit me?

POCHE (good-naturedly). Of course, go ahead, go ahead.

ETIENNE. Thank you, sir. (To himself.) The hussy, the hussy. (He runs down the stairway.)

POCHE (to the audience). I don't know what's going on today. (A ringing of a bell is heard.)

EUGENIE (who has been listening with wry amusement). Some one is ringing for you.

POCHE. Here I come. Here I come. (He disappears down the corridor.)

(LUCIENNE is coming up the stairs.)

LUCIENNE (to herself). It certainly was Etienne.

EUGENIE. Madame?

LUCIENNE. The man who almost knocked me over on the stairs. Wasn't that M. Chandebise's butler?

EUGENIE. That's quite possible, madame. He asked for the room reserved under that name. He came to warn a lady that her husband was

going to kill her, and when he came face to face with the lady, she was his wife. It's a real riddle, madame.

LUCIENNE. What are you talking about?

EUGENIE. I'm only telling you what I saw.

LUCIENNE. Tell me instead which room is reserved for M. Chandebise? (EUGENIE indicates the room at L, then with an enormous shrug of her shoulders, goes upstairs.)

EUGENIE. It's that one, madame, and I have instructions to let anyone in.

LUCIENNE. Thank you. (She goes to knock on the door.)

(CAMILLE creeps back in, looking for his palate.)

CAMILLE. Where could my palate have gone?

LUCIENNE. Nobody's here? (She knocks again.)

CAMILLE (arriving at a leg, raising his head). Madame de Histangua! (He runs down the stairway.)

LUCIENNE. How could that be? Raymonde told me to come at five-thirty and everything would be over.

(CAMILLE appears hastily.)

CAMILLE. Victor Emmanuel! Victor Emmanuel again. (He runs out down the corridor.)

LUCIENNE, who has not seen CAMILLE, goes toward the stairway.)

LUCIENNE. Oh, well.

(CHANDEBISE comes up the stairs, dressed as in the first act.)

CHANDEBISE. Madame!



LUCIENNE. Monsieur Chandebise!

CHANDEBISE (taking her quickly by the hand).

Finally, I find you.

LUCIENNE (bewildered). What is it?

CHANDEBISE. Have you seen my butler, Etienne?

LUCIENNE. Why?

CHANDEBISE. I sent him to find you. I thought I had to go to a dinner, but it isn't until tomorrow, so here I am. (Changing his tone.) You naughty child.

LUCIENNE. What?

CHANDEBISE. I know everything, but why didn't you sign your letter.

LUCIENNE. My letter? What letter?

CHANDEBISE. The one you wrote me to arrange this meeting.

LUCIENNE (understanding). Who led you to believe that I----

CHANDEBISE. Dear lady, not knowing who you were, I showed it to your husband, and he recognized your handwriting--unfortunately.

LUCIENNE (shrieking). My husband saw that letter? *Caramba!* Where is he now?

CHANDEBISE. On our heels.

LUCIENNE. And you stand there? (She runs to the stairs, aghast.)

CHANDEBISE (running after her). Love is madness. Madness!

(LUCIENNE and CHANDEBISE disappear down the stairway, as OLYMPE appears from upstairs.)

OLYMPE (calling). Eugenie! Eugenie! Where is that girl?

(CHANDEBISE re-enters quickly, with LUCIENNE.)

CHANDEBISE. He's here! It's Histangua! Every man for himself!

LUCIENNE (following him). My husband! I'm lost!

OLYMPE. What is the matter?

CHANDEBISE (bumping into OLYMPE, who stands in front of entrance). Out of my way.

OLYMPE. What?

LUCIENNE (also bumping into OLYMPE). Please. (LUCIENNE takes refuge in the room at L, then in the bathroom D L. CHANDEBISE has run in to Albicocco's room.)

OLYMPE. But, madame----

(RAYMONDE appears from the corridor, followed by TOURNEL. She has her face veiled.)

RAYMONDE. I'll be so relieved when we are out of this place. (Bumping into OLYMPE.) Pardon.

OLYMPE. Oh?

TOURNEL (to OLYMPE). Please excuse me. (They exit down the stairs.)

OLYMPE. What's going on?

HOMENIDES (voice heard down below). Where are they? I'll kill them! I'll strangle them! (Shouts from RAYMONDE and TOURNEL.)

OLYMPE. What? Again?

(RAYMONDE and TOURNEL reappear.)

RAYMONDE. Homenidès de Histangua! (Bumps into OLYMPE.) Sorry.

TOURNEL. The crazy Spaniard. (He knocks into OLYMPE.) Are you going to stand there forever? (They run down the corridor.)

OLYMPE (out of breath). My God! My God!

HOMENIDES (brandishing a revolver). Tournel and



a veiled lady! It's my wife! *Caramba!* (He starts in pursuit of the fugitives.)

OLYMPE (stepping in his way). Where are you going, sir?

HOMENIDES (making her pirouette around). I'm going to kill them both. Get out of my way! (He runs into the corridor.)

OLYMPE. Kill them? Help! Help!

(FERRAILLON arrives from upstairs, followed by EUGENIE.)

FERRAILLON. What's the matter?

OLYMPE (out of breath). Ferrailon, there's a madman who wants to kill everybody.

FERRAILLON. What?

OLYMPE (starting to faint). Oh! Oh! Oh! (EUGENIE catches her.)

EUGENIE (calling for help). Sir! Sir!

FERRAILLON (running over to hold OLYMPE up on the other side). Oh, hold on now, hold on. Take her to room number two. (He indicates a room in the corridor.) Get the smelling salts.

EUGENIE (as she helps OLYMPE). Yes, sir! (OLYMPE and EUGENIE go down the corridor. One can hear Albicocco saying "*Andatevene*" and Chandebise saying "I can't, I can't. There's a crazy man out there.")

FERRAILLON. What is that racket?

(Suddenly, the door opens, and CHANDEBISE and ALBICOCCO comes out, wrestling each other.)

ALBICOCCO. *Andatevene.*

CHANDEBISE. Leave me alone. Leave me alone.

FERRAILLON (intervening). What's going on?

(ALBICOCCO overpowers CHANDEBISE, whom he sends pivoting around to his left, and FERRAILLON strikes him as he goes by. ALBICOCCO goes back into his room.)

FERRAILLON. Poche! Poche again!

CHANDEBISE. What are you saying?

FERRAILLON (grabbing him by the arm and giving him at each invective a kick in the right place). You miserable fellow!

CHANDEBISE (jumping in the air at each kick he receives). What's this all about? What's going on?

FERRAILLON. Good for nothing!

CHANDEBISE. This is too much!

FERRAILLON. *Cochon.*

CHANDEBISE (finally freeing himself). Listen here, you!

FERRAILLON (in a menacing tone). What?

CHANDEBISE. I am Monsieur Chandebise, Director of the Boston Life Company.

FERRAILLON. That does it! He's drunk! He's completely drunk!

CHANDEBISE. I have proof.

FERRAILLON (grabbing him as he did before, and kicking him). Here's something for your proof. And take this, for Chandebise. (Looking at Chandebise's jacket.) What's this? Will you please----(He grabs CHANDEBISE and takes hold of his jacket. With much pulling and tugging and scolding, he succeeds in removing it.)

CHANDEBISE. See here now!

FERRAILLON (taking off his hat). Take that off! (He goes over to the free hat peg and hangs up the hat and the jacket.)

CHANDEBISE (literally exhausted). He's a madman.

FERRAILLON (who has the cap and the uniform from



the coatrack). Put on your cap. (He sticks the cap on Chandebise's head and bangs it down over his ears with a punch.)

CHANDEBISE. No, no.

FERRAILLON. And your coat!

CHANDEBISE. I don't want to. I don't want to.

FERRAILLON. Put it on and be quick about it.

CHANDEBISE (frightened). All right.

FERRAILLON. Now get upstairs and into your room. Fast.

CHANDEBISE (running toward the stairway). He's mad. Crazy.

FERRAILLON (running toward the stairs). You want me to kick you again? (CHANDEBISE, frightened, takes off fast, almost falls, disappears. To the audience.) There you have the effects of vermouth. You finally find a good servant, and he has to be a drunk.

(EUGENIE suddenly comes out of the corridor.)

EUGENIE. Sir! Sir!

FERRAILLON. What is it now?

EUGENIE. Madame has had a nervous attack.

FERRAILLON. What is she bothering us with that now for? Run up to number ten and ask Dr. Finache if he can come and see my wife.

EUGENIE. Yes, sir. (She runs up the stairs.)

FERRAILLON. Not a moment's peace. (He goes down the stairs.)

(POCHE comes in from the corridor, his apron in his hand.)

POCHE. I'd better get to the station. (He goes to hang up his apron on the hat peg.) Who stole my coat and my cap? Who would steal a hotel

porter's uniform? Anyway, he left me a hat and a jacket. (Tries on the hat.) It fits me. One good turn deserves another. (He has put on Chandebise's jacket, when he hears someone ring.) Somebody's calling again. (He heads down the corridor.)

(EUGENIE comes down from upstairs, followed by FINACHE.)

ENGENIE. This way, Doctor, this way. She's in a terrible state.

FINACHE. You think I came here to take care of sick people? (Resignedly.) What's the matter with the poor woman?

EUGENIE. She received a shock.

FINACHE (who doesn't understand). Electricity?

EUGENIE. No, no--a fright.

FINACHE. And that's why you disturbed me? All you had to do was to give her some bicarbonate of soda. It would have calmed her.

EUGENIE. Well, as long as you have come down this far, you might as well see her.

FINACHE. I suppose so.

EUGENIE. This way, Doctor, please. (They disappear down the corridor.)

(CHANDEBISE, still in the uniform, cautiously descends the stairs, talking to himself.)

CHANDEBISE. Is that madman gone? If this is how he treats his guests, his clientele must be exclusively masochists. (Goes to the peg on which FERRAILLON had hung his clothes.) Where's my hat and coat? (He looks around.)

(RAYMONDE and TOURNEL come stumbling down



the stairs.)

RAYMONDE. We lost him. Quick, a car!

TOURNEL. There's the porter.

RAYMONDE. Quick, Poche, a car!

CHANDEBISE. What?

TOURNEL. A car!

CHANDEBISE. My wife!

TOURNEL. What?

RAYMONDE. My husband! I knew it was my husband. I knew it! (She runs off).

CHANDEBISE. And Tournel--with her!

TOURNEL (bewitched). It's you.

CHANDEBISE (jumping at TOURNEL). What are you doing here with my wife?

TOURNEL (half strangled). Now, my friend! We explained everything to you, just a little while ago.

CHANDEBISE (shaking him). What are you talking about? Answer me.

TOURNEL (frightened). Please! Stop this!

(FERRAILLON bursts on the scene from downstairs.)

FERRAILLON. It's about time you finished this noise. (He grabs CHANDEBISE and sends him reeling. TOURNEL, liberated, profits by the moment.)

TOURNEL (taking off as fast as possible). Thank God!

FERRAILLON. Poche. Poche again.

CHANDEBISE. The madman!

FERRAILLON (giving him a kick). You dirty beast!

CHANDEBISE (jumping up in the air). Don't do that!

FERRAILLON. Animal!

CHANDEBISE. Oh!

FERRAILLON. *Cochon!*

CHANDEBISE. Stop that.

FERRAILLON. Didn't you get enough?

CHANDEBISE (taking off). There's a madman here. A madman! Help!

FERRAILLON (running after him). I'll give you a madman! You drunk! Get back to your hovel and sober up. (They disappear up the stairs.)

(ALBICOCCO comes out of his room, leaving the door open.)

ALBICOCCO. *O la miseria. Dovrò vedere io se continui per sempre.* (Goes downstairs.)

(CAMILLE appears from the corridor, talking to himself.)

CAMILLE. I think the way is free. Now is the time to slip out.

(LUCIENNE has come out of the bathroom D L.)

LUCIENNE (talking to herself). I don't hear any more noise.

CAMILLE (inspecting the floor). I wonder what became of my palate.

LUCIENNE (coming out into the hall). My husband must have left by now.

CAMILLE (face to face with LUCIENNE). Madame de Histangua! (He starts to run.)

LUCIENNE (recognizing him). Monsieur Camille! (Catching him and holding to him.) Monsieur Camille! Don't abandon me. My husband is here with a revolver. He wants to kill every-



body.

CAMILLE (jumping up). Kill everyone?

LUCIENNE. I beg of you. Don't leave me now.

CAMILLE. No. No.

HOMENIDES (from off U C) Where are they?

LUCIENNE. My husband! (CAMILLE jumps into the room at L, closes the door and braces himself against it. LUCIENNE, seeing Albicocco's door open, runs into that room.)

(ALBICOCCO, who had come up the stairs and observed this whole scene from the entrance way, rubs his hands in anticipation.)

ALBICOCCO. *Che bella bambina!*

(ALBICOCCO enters his room as HOMENIDES bounds in from the corridor.)

HOMENIDES. Where are they? I will kill them all! Isn't there anybody in this hotel? (He runs once around the large hall and disappears again down the stairs.)

(POCHE enters from the corridor.)

POCHE. Well, well, well, who is shouting like that?

(LUCIENNE comes out of Albicocco's room. He is holding her very close.)

LUCIENNE. Will you please leave me alone, you impudent fellow! (She pushes him away, and gives him a slap in the face.)

ALBICOCCO. *Ancora--insomma!* (He goes back

to his room.)

POCHE (laughing). Well done!

LUCIENNE (rushing toward POCHE). Monsieur! Heaven must have sent you back. Save me. Hide me.

POCHE. What's the matter, madame?

LUCIENNE (half fainting on Poche's chest). My husband has arrived.

POCHE (nervously). What are you saying?

LUCIENNE. Save me, save me.

POCHE (holding her up in his arms). Here, this way. (They start down the stairs.)

HOMENIDES (voice heard from down below).

*Caramba!* Now I have you!

LUCIENNE. There he is! (Running to the door L.)

Let me in! Let me in!

CAMILLE (placing all his weight against the door). Nobody comes in here.

POCHE. Over there. In with Baptistin. (He and LUCIENNE enter the back room.)

(HOMENIDES creeps menacing on from downstairs.)

HOMENIDES. There's no use hiding! I saw you!

(EUGENIE comes in from corridor.)

EUGENIE. Did you wish something, monsieur?

HOMENIDES. Monsieur Chandebise! And the lady who was with him!

EUGENIE (pointing out the room in which is CAMILLE).

Over there, sir. In that room. (She leaves.)

HOMENIDES. Open up! Open up!

CAMILLE. There is nobody in here!

HOMENIDES (pushing on the door). Open up! One. Two. Three. (He pushes each time against



the door, finally sending CAMILLE reeling across the room. HOMENIDES jumps at his throat.) My wife! Where is she? Where have you hidden her?

CAMILLE (terrified). I don't have her. Believe me. Here! Search me!

HOMENIDES (without even listening to him). If I find her, I will kill her--like this. (He fires a shot at the button on the side of the bed.)

(The platform turns, carrying LUCIENNE and POCHE into view. There is an instant of stunned recognition, and then an explosion of activity.)

LUCIENNE. My husband! (She runs out, followed by POCHE.)

HOMENIDES. My wife! (He runs out in pursuit.)

POCHE. My God!

(People arrive from all sides, shouting, "There was a shot!" "Stop him!" "Disarm that man!" and grab HOMENIDES as the curtain falls.)

CURTAIN

## ACT THREE

SCENE: The Chandebise living room. Same stage setting as in the first act.

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: The stage is empty. ANTOINETTE enters from U L, her apron and cap in her hand. She is fastening her uniform.

ANTOINETTE. He'll be here in a second. I'll never have time! (She puts on her cap.) My fingers won't move.

ETIENNE (calling from a short distance off R). Antoinette! Antoinette!

ANTOINETTE. Oh. (She rushes through the archway and we hear the bolt slide.)

ETIENNE (still off R, but closer). Antoinette!

ANTOINETTE (as she puts on her apron). My God!

ETIENNE (shaking the main door from outside).

Will you open up in there? The trollop. She locked herself in. (His voice fading off.)

Just wait! (ANTOINETTE goes over, pulls back the bolt, then runs across to library door D L.)

(ETIENNE, dressed as he was in the second act, marches through the kitchen door U L.)

ETIENNE. Antoinette! Where is she hiding?



ANTOINETTE (downstage--appearing to come from library, and very calm). Are you the one who's shouting like that?

ETIENNE. What do you mean--locking yourself in?

ANTOINETTE (pretending ignorance). What are you talking about?

ETIENNE. I asked you, why did you lock yourself in?

ANTOINETTE (with imperturbable self-possession). I was not locked in.

ETIENNE (mimicking her). She was not locked in. (He runs over to the main door, and we hear the door open.)

ANTOINETTE (calling). I'm sorry if you don't know how to open a door.

(ETIENNE re-enters.)

ETIENNE. All right, the door wasn't locked, but what were you doing in the Hotel Pussycat?

ANTOINETTE (as if he were speaking Chinese). Where?

ETIENNE. The Hotel Pussycat!

ANTOINETTE. And what is that?

ETIENNE. I surprised you there, not half an hour ago.

ANTOINETTE (accused unjustly). Me? I haven't set foot outside the door.

ETIENNE. I expected some ingenious explanation, but to tell me that you weren't even there--that's ridiculous.

ANTOINETTE. I wasn't.

ETIENNE. I saw you--with my own eyes.

ANTOINETTE (smugly). Whether you saw me or not, I wasn't there.

ETIENNE. Half undressed, in the arms of a lunatic Italian.

ANTOINETTE. Me? Antoinette?

ETIENNE. Yes, you. Yes, you. And he hit me.

Oh, the shame!

ANTOINETTE (in a reasoning tone). Etienne, I don't even speak Italian.

ETIENNE. You were doing quite well at pantomime!

ANTOINETTE (unperturbed and emphatic). I've been here all day.

ETIENNE. Liar. I shall now demonstrate that you have not been here. (He starts upstage.)

ANTOINETTE (anxiously). What are you going to do?

ETIENNE (coming back). Question the concierge.

ANTOINETTE. The concierge?

ETIENNE. He'll tell me if you went out or not. (He goes toward the telephone.)

ANTOINETTE (grabbing him). Etienne! You're crazy! You're not going to bring the concierge into this ridiculous discussion? He'll laugh at you.

ETIENNE (to audience). She changes her tune. (To ANTOINETTE.) You hadn't forseen this. You thought you were going to deceive me, and never be caught. (He pushes her away and goes to telephone, by the door.)

ANTOINETTE. All right. Do as you please. (She plants herself squarely facing the audience, her back to ETIENNE.)

ETIENNE. Hello. Is that you, Monsieur Fumar? . . . Tell me, what time did my wife leave today? (There is a pause. ANTOINETTE bites her lip.) She what? . . . She did not go out? (Antoinette's face becomes very serene.) That's not possible. Perhaps you didn't see her go by, but she certainly----(Pause.) She had tea with you? . . . Yes, I--I see--nobody was dining upstairs, so she came----



ANTOINETTE (holding up five fingers to the audience, then gesturing head toward the telephone). Five francs this is costing me.

ETIENNE (grimly). All right. Thank you very much. I am sorry I disturbed you. (He hangs up telephone and stares into space.) Unbelievable. I wonder if I really am going crazy?

ANTOINETTE (magnanimously, walking in the direction of the kitchen door). I'm willing to let the subject drop.

ETIENNE (defeated). You'd better get back to your kitchen. (The sound of the bell is heard as ANTOINETTE goes out. To the bell.) All right, all right! (Then, to himself.) Either that woman is a monster or I'll have to see a doctor. (The bell rings again.) I'm coming. (He goes to the main door.)

(RAYMONDE enters, followed by TOURNEL.)

RAYMONDE. Didn't you hear me ring?

ETIENNE. Yes, madame. I had just----

RAYMONDE. Has Monsieur come back yet?

ETIENNE. No, madame.

RAYMONDE. Then, leave us, Etienne.

ETIENNE. Yes, madame. (Exits.)

TOURNEL (anxious to leave). Well, Raymonde, my dear, since you are home now, I think I'll be running along.

RAYMONDE (taking off her hat and gloves). You're going to leave me now? Who knows what kind of mood my husband will be in when he gets back.

TOURNEL (resigned). You think it would be better for me to be here?

RAYMONDE. I don't want to face him alone.

TOURNEL (sighing). All right. I'll stay.

RAYMONDE. What happened to your enthusiasm?

TOURNEL. Well, you know----

RAYMONDE. I do know. Men are always in a hurry--first to make the conquest, then to avoid the responsibilities.

TOURNEL. What responsibilities? Nothing happened.

RAYMONDE. That wasn't your fault. And my husband doesn't know that nothing happened. Finding us at that Pussycat place, he has every right to imagine--what he imagines. And he does imagine.

TOURNEL (bewildered). Apparently. But I don't understand why he didn't get angry right away. When he came revolving into that room, he didn't seem very upset.

RAYMONDE. He even kissed us.

TOURNEL. Then, in the hall, he turned on us.

RAYMONDE (as bell is heard). Somebody rang!

TOURNEL (anxiously). Maybe it's he!

LUCIENNE (voice, off R). Has Madame come back?

ETIENNE (voice, off R). Yes, madame.

RAYMONDE. It's Lucienne.

(LUCIENNE comes in U R.)

RAYMONDE. Lucienne!

LUCIENNE. Raymonde. What a drama! What a tragedy!

RAYMONDE (raising her eyes to the heavens). You're telling me!

LUCIENNE. I can barely stand up, I'm trembling so.

RAYMONDE. Poor thing!

LUCIENNE (falling into a chair). What shall I do? (Tragically.) I shall be forced to live in rented rooms--under bridges. I can't go home



and face my husband--that savage.

RAYMONDE. I should think not. Your husband is completely mad. When he saw Tournel and me at the Hotel Pussycat, he began to chase us, brandishing a revolver.

TOURNEL. Both of us.

LUCIENNE (standing up). You were chased also?

TOURNEL. He was like an erupting volcano.

LUCIENNE. Raymonde, if I hadn't found your husband, who supported me and dragged me away, I would have fainted, and I don't know what would have happened.

RAYMONDE. You saw Victor Emmanuel?

LUCIENNE. Yes. And he even frightened me a little. He was quite strange.

RAYMONDE. You noticed, it too?

LUCIENNE. I'd seen him ten minutes before, and he'd spoken to me quite reasonably. He'd even warned me about my husband. Then a terrible scene! Incredible. We arrive at the bottom of the stairs, he looks at me strangely and says, "Who is this Martian? Do you know him?" "Do I know him? Obviously, he's my husband. You know him as well as I do." He answers me, "But I don't know you." "My God!" I say to myself, "Chandebise is going crazy." I look at him. He isn't laughing. And then he begins to chatter incoherently.

RAYMONDE (to TOURNEL). The same as he did to us.

TOURNEL. Exactly.

LUCIENNE. He was the hotel porter . . . he was bringing up the wood . . . they had taken his uniform. A pile of idiot things.

RAYMONDE. Ridiculous.

TOURNEL. Astounding.

LUCIENNE. And suddenly, he gets it into his head

that we should go to a pub and--(Scandalized.)  
--tie one on.

RAYMONDE and TOURNEL. Oh!

LUCIENNE. You can imagine how startled I was. "Come now, Chandebise." He answers me, "Poche, Poche."

RAYMONDE. Yes. That was it. Poche.

LUCIENNE. I really became frightened. I planted your husband with his wine merchant and rushed here. *Caramba!* What an afternoon. (She falls into a chair.)

RAYMONDE. Either my husband has lost his mind, or else the whole thing has been premeditated.

TOURNEL. What a day!

LUCIENNE. A husband who wants to shoot off my head----

RAYMONDE. And one who is losing his----

TOURNEL. In a minute I'll be losing mine. (The bell rings. Instinctively, they huddle together.)

LUCIENNE (in a very low voice). Someone, someone rang.

TOURNEL. Perhaps it's Chandebise.

RAYMONDE. He has his key.

TOURNEL (ominously). Sometimes you forget your key.

LUCIENNE. Isn't anybody going to open the door?

RAYMONDE. I don't know.

TOURNEL. Somebody must be at the door.

RAYMONDE (with hope). Perhaps he's gone away. (During these last words, the outside door can be heard being opened.)

(ETIENNE enters from main door.)

ETIENNE. Madame, madame!

RAYMONDE. Is it----

ETIENNE. It's Monsieur.

RAYMONDE. Oh!



ETIENNE. Something is wrong with him, madame. I opened the door, he came in, like this--(He imitates Poche's walk.)--and he said to me, "Does M. Chandebise live here?"

EVERYONE. What?

ETIENNE. I thought at first he wanted me to laugh, so I said, "Ha, ha, certainly Monsieur Chandebise lives here, ha, ha." But he didn't laugh. He just said, "Will you please tell him that I have come to speak about my uniform."

RAYMONDE (to ETIENNE, with energy). Where is Monsieur now?

ETIENNE. In the vestibule. He is waiting.

TOURNEL and LUCIENNE. What?

RAYMONDE. This is incredible. (She walks up to the door.) What are you doing there? Come in here!

(POCHE comes in slowly with a radiant smile on his face, and his hat on his head.)

POCHE. If you please?

RAYMONDE. In the foyer? Like a tradesman?

POCHE (snatching off his hat). Madame?

EVERYBODY. Madame?

POCHE. I was waiting for M. Chandebise.

TOURNEL and LUCIENNE. What?

RAYMONDE. What are you saying?

ETIENNE. Does Madame hear?

POCHE (giving ETIENNE a blow in the stomach with his hat). I recognize you. You were the one at the Pussycat a little while ago.

ETIENNE. Yes, sir, I was.

POCHE. You're the cuckold.

ETIENNE (vexed). Really, sir.

RAYMONDE. What is he talking about?

POCHE. And Madame. The lady of the hotel, the

kissing lady. (He advances toward her.) Good day, madame.

RAYMONDE (frightened, pulling TOURNEL between her and POCHE). *Mon dieu!* Tournel! Tournel! What's the matter with him?

TOURNEL. Come now. Really, my friend.

POCHE. And her gigolo. How's everything? (He tries to embrace TOURNEL.)

TOURNEL (pushing him aside). Victor Emmanuel. Victor Emmanuel.

POCHE. No. Poche. Poche.

LUCIENNE. It's Poche again.

POCHE (recognizing LUCIENNE). And the lady running from the crazy Martian. Wasn't it terrible? What a fright.

LUCIENNE (somewhat bewildered). Yes. Terrible. A fright. (She edges toward the others as she speaks, then suddenly runs over to join them.)

POCHE (laughing). Everybody lives together under the same roof. Ha, ha. That must be jolly. (All of them huddle together, considering him. POCHE is suddenly stopped in the middle of his laughter, by this general attitude.) What's the matter with you?

EVERYBODY (rapidly). Nothing. Nothing. Nothing.

POCHE (to the audience). They are all very nice, but they are also a little crazy in this family.

RAYMONDE. What's the matter with him?

LUCIENNE (in a whisper to RAYMONDE). Raymonde, you must take him to a doctor.

ETIENNE. Would Madame want me to telephone the doctor? I could call from the kitchen.

RAYMONDE. Please. (ETIENNE turns around and walks away.)

POCHE (walking up toward ETIENNE). You are leaving?

ETIENNE. Yes, sir. Yes.



POCHE. Don't forget to say to M. Chandebise----

LUCIENNE (to RAYMONDE). Did you hear him?

ETIENNE (to POCHE). I won't forget, sir. (He goes out U L.)

TOURNEL (whispering). Why is he acting like a fool?

RAYMONDE. The whole thing is premeditated--some kind of trick.

POCHE (explaining). My uniform jacket was hanging on the coat rack, and when I came down the stairs on my way to the station----

RAYMONDE (with authority). We've had enough of this.

POCHE (his mouth open). What?

RAYMONDE (very firmly). If you are sick, say so. We will take care of you. If, however, this is some joke that you are playing on us, it's in very poor taste.

POCHE. Ah.

RAYMONDE. We explained every single thing that took place. We proved to you, by simple A plus B logic, that nothing happened between M. Tournel and me. Mme. Homenidès will confirm this.

LUCIENNE. Absolutely.

RAYMONDE. That should be enough. Now, if you persist in believing--what you believe--well, then--M. Tournel is here to answer you. (She pulls TOURNEL by the sleeve.)

TOURNEL (as he is pushed over toward POCHE). Answer him?

POCHE. But I didn't ask him anything.

RAYMONDE (in exasperation). Whether you believe us or not, at least stop acting like an idiot.

POCHE. Me?

RAYMONDE. Who else? First, you accept the

evidence, and embrace us, then ten minutes later, you jump at M. Tournel's throat.

POCHE (turning toward TOURNEL). I jumped at your throat?

TOURNEL. Yes.

RAYMONDE. None of this makes any sense. Do you believe us, yes or no?

POCHE. Of course.

RAYMONDE. Well, then. Embrace us, once and for all, and let this be the end of it.

POCHE (wiping his mouth with the back of his hand). I would embrace you ten times.

EVERYBODY. Wonderful.

RAYMONDE (at the moment POCHE kisses her cheek, pushing him away). Oh! You smell of alcohol.

POCHE. Me?

RAYMONDE (grabbing him by the chin and pushing his head toward TOURNEL). Here, smell him, Tournel, smell him.

TOURNEL (stepping back, half asphyxiated). A veritable wine cellar.

RAYMONDE (still indignant). Now you have taken to drink.

POCHE. Just three or four of the tiniest glasses. Question of getting my blood running again. I had a real scare today.

RAYMONDE. There you have it. He is drunk. Completely drunk.

POCHE. Look here, my little lady.

RAYMONDE (pushing him aside). Sleep off your alcohol some place else.

POCHE. What?

TOURNEL. I'm amazed at you, Victor Emmanuel.

POCHE (speaking directly in Tournel's face and sending an explosion of breath toward him).

Poche, I'm Poche!

TOURNEL (upset by the alcoholic breath, pushing



POCHE away with his two hands). Be Poche, if you want to be.

POCHE. What's wrong with being Poche? (To the audience.) If they keep this up, I'm really going to get angry.

RAYMONDE. This is shameful.

(ETIENNE runs in, followed by FINACHE.)

ETIENNE. Here is the doctor, madame.

FINACHE (to RAYMONDE). What's the matter?

Etienne told me that he was just about to telephone me. (Very amiably, to POCHE.)

Hello there, Chandebise.

POCHE (looking around him). Where's Chandebise?

FINACHE. Ha, ha, very funny. (To RAYMONDE.) But what's wrong?

RAYMONDE. It's Monsieur, who is dead drunk.

FINACHE (not believing her). What? Chandebise?

RAYMONDE. Smell him. Smell him.

FINACHE (to POCHE). This is absurd. Are you drunk?

POCHE (puffing the words in his face). You're talking piffle.

FINACHE (jumping back, to RAYMONDE). Very strong.

RAYMONDE. You see for yourself.

FINACHE. What did they make you drink, to put you in such a state?

POCHE. Stop making fun of me. I am no more drunk than you are.

FINACHE (trying to calm him). Certainly not, my dear friend.

POCHE (speaking in succession to each of the actors, who runs away as he approaches). Don't "dear friend" me. I don't even know you. What do you want with me? I came here to see M.

Chandebise about my uniform. I want my uniform! (He puts on his hat.)

FINACHE. It's not possible.

RAYMONDE. You see it yourself.

LUCIENNE. For a moment, he seems to make sense, and then--(She gestures.)--nothing!

TOURNEL. He has been like that since this afternoon. (They all consider him in silence, shaking their heads.)

POCHE. Why are you all staring at me? Look, I'm not a bad sort, but I don't like people making fun of me.

FINACHE. Of course you don't.

POCHE. I'm not leaving till I get my uniform. (He sits in a chair and folds his arms across his chest.)

RAYMONDE. Would you believe it?

TOURNEL. Not if I hadn't seen it. (The dialogue which follows is whispered.)

FINACHE. Has this ever happened to him before?

RAYMONDE. Never. Isn't that right, Etienne?

ETIENNE. Never!

FINACHE. These hallucinatory phenomena, states of complete amnesia, total loss of any notion of one's own personality--I have seen them only in inveterate alcoholics.

EVERYONE. Alcoholics?

FINACHE. And after this, we can expect delirium tremens.

RAYMONDE. But it doesn't make sense. He never takes anything, except a little glass after each meal.

TOURNEL. And very often, he leaves half of it.

ETIENNE. Which I finish--to avoid waste.

LUCIENNE. One glass a meal can't do this.

FINACHE. Yes, it can. Sometimes that's sufficient. Alcoholism is not a question of quantity.



It's a question of idiosyncrasy.  
TOURNEL. To this extent?  
FINACHE. Idiosyncrasy means the individual way each person has of feeling the effect of something. Thus, one person may absorb a liter a day with no effect. Somebody else drinks a glass and becomes an alcoholic.  
POCHE (to audience). They're making fun of me.  
FINACHE. And naturally, it's more dangerous for the light drinkers because they don't distrust themselves. Just a little glass after each meal, what's that? Until the day when the real crisis arrives, and then----(Gestures toward POCHE.) There you have the result.  
POCHE (standing up). This has got to stop right now, or it is going to end badly.  
FINACHE (going up to him). My good friend.  
POCHE. I am not an idiot, you know.  
FINACHE (seeking to calm him). Well, of course you're not. (He says to the others:) This irritability, one of the manifestations.  
POCHE (coming over to him). What?  
FINACHE. Nothing, my friend. Nothing. Stretch out your hand.  
POCHE (astonished). My hand?  
FINACHE (holding his arm out stiffly, with his fingers spread out). Yes, like that. Hold it.  
POCHE (obeying mechanically). Why?  
RAYMONDE. It's trembling.  
FINACHE. Alcoholic trembling. It's one of the characteristic symptoms.  
POCHE (jumping up and down angrily). Ahha, ahha, ahha.  
EVERYONE (jumping from fright). Ah!  
POCHE. Stop it. Stop it.  
RAYMONDE. My dear, please calm yourself.  
POCHE. Lady----(Leans forward and whispers

something brief and obviously vulgar in her ear.)  
RAYMONDE. What? What did you say?  
FINACHE (leading her away from POCHE as he speaks). Pay no attention. He's taken leave of his senses. Don't irritate him.  
RAYMONDE. I don't care if he is an alcoholic. To tell me to--what he said to me!  
FINACHE (pushing everybody toward the library door). All right! He's a little excited. Leave Etienne and me alone with him. We'll try to put him to bed.  
RAYMONDE. Yes. Put him somewhere, because, really----  
FINACHE. We will, we will. Go ahead, Tournel. (To LUCIENNE.) Madame.  
LUCIENNE. Certainly, doctor. What a pity. (RAYMONDE, LUCIENNE and TOURNEL go out D L.)  
FINACHE (coming down toward POCHE). Now, my friend.  
POCHE. You were right to get rid of them!  
FINACHE. I thought it best.  
POCHE. What is the matter with those people? Are they nuts?  
FINACHE (good-naturedly). A little crazy. A little crazy.  
POCHE (to ETIENNE). What did I tell you? A little crazy.  
ETIENNE (imitating FINACHE). That's right. A little crazy.  
POCHE. You should have let me know. You could have whispered--a little tap of the finger--(He taps his head.)--something----I was getting confused myself. (FINACHE grabs him by the wrist in order to take his pulse.) Why are you grabbing me like that?  
FINACHE (taking out his watch). Out of friendship.



POCHE (amused). You're acting a little strange yourself.

FINACHE (putting his watch back in his pocket). That's very curious. You have almost no pulse.

POCHE. What?

FINACHE. I say, you have almost no----(To ETIENNE.) His pulse is hardly beating.

POCHE (jovially). That's because I'm not beatable.

FINACHE (laughing, good-naturedly). Very funny, very funny. (In a low tone, to ETIENNE, giving him a poke in the arm.) Laugh, laugh at his jokes.

ETIENNE (laughing without conviction). Ha, ha, ha. Ha, ha, ha.

FINACHE. Yes, yes, yes. (Becoming serious.) All right, now that everybody's had a good laugh, it's time to be more reasonable.

POCHE. You go first.

FINACHE. I'm your friend. (Factually.) You know me.

POCHE. No.

FINACHE (a little taken aback). I am the doctor. The good doctor. I take care of people, accidents, sick people, diet--the good doctor.

POCHE. O.K. You're a good doctor.

FINACHE. There.

POCHE (to audience). Now he's doing it.

FINACHE (profoundly). Well, I feel, as I look at you, that you must be tired.

POCHE (surprised). Me?

FINACHE. You are tired. (To ETIENNE.) He is very tired.

ETIENNE. Exhausted.

POCHE. Well, of course I'm tired. Anybody would be. Up at five o'clock, sweeping the hotel, waxing the floors, bringing up the wood.

I'm the good porter. (ETIENNE and FINACHE exchange a wearied look.)

FINACHE. Now then. You are going to undress and go to bed.

POCHE. Here?

FINACHE (still good-naturedly). At least you are going to take off that uncomfortable jacket and let Etienne bring you a nice warm bathrobe.

POCHE (at the point of tears). I want my uniform.

FINACHE. Yes, but while you're waiting----(He makes a sign to ETIENNE.) Etienne!

ETIENNE. Yes, Doctor. (He goes up the stairs.)

FINACHE. There's an excellent bed just up these stairs. You are going to stretch out, and take a good snooze.

POCHE. What about M. Chandebise?

FINACHE (to himself). Oh, my God! (To POCHE.) If he says anything to you, you come and tell me.

POCHE (weakening). Well----

(ETIENNE comes down the stairs with a bathrobe.)

ETIENNE. Here is the bathrobe.

FINACHE. Good. Take off your jacket.

POCHE. You're the doctor. Besides, I guess I could do with a short snooze.

FINACHE. Good fellow. (He and ETIENNE put the bathrobe on POCHE. Don't tell me you're not more comfortable.)

POCHE (tying the belt). I look just like the Lord Mayor's coach driver. (ETIENNE puts the jacket on a chair.)

FINACHE. There you are.

POCHE. It's much softer than the uniform.

FINACHE. And now a little bird tells me that you must be thirsty.



POCHE (jovially). He's a very clever little bird.

FINACHE (laughing). Isn't he? Well. I'm going to get you a little something. It may not be too tasty, but swallow it anyway.

POCHE. Something stiff, eh?

FINACHE. Yes, rather, rather.

POCHE. I may work at the Hotel Pussycat, but I'm no pussyfooter. (He laughs loudly.)

ETIENNE and FINACHE join the laughter.)

FINACHE. Wonderful. (In a low tone to ETIENNE.) Do you have some ammonia?

ETIENNE. Yes, sir.

POCHE (who does not hear what they have said). What luck. A little snort, then a little snooze. (He goes to sit down.)

FINACHE. Put ten drops in a glass of water and bring it here.

ETIENNE. At once.

FINACHE. Then, when he's sober, make him take ----Wait. I'll write out a prescription. Where's something to write on?

ETIENNE (pointing out the writing desk). In the desk, Doctor.

FINACHE. Good. Better take him right up and put him to bed.

ETIENNE (very affectionately, to POCHE). Will you please come, sir? Here, take my arm.

POCHE (very much touched, as he gets up and takes Etienne's arm). You have a very kind heart.

ETIENNE (as he leads POCHE up the stairs). Oh, sir. You honor me.

POCHE. I'm really sorry that you are a cuckold.

ETIENNE. But I am not. She just had a little tea with the concierge.

POCHE. Well, if that's the only thing he gave her! (They go out up the stairs. NOTE: As soon

as he has left the stage, the actor will take off his Poche costume, in order to prepare for his transformation into Chandebise, which he would not have the time to do after his next scene. He should put on the uniform and on top of that, his bathrobe.)

FINACHE (who has gone to the writing desk). Good God. What smells? It must be this paper. (When FINACHE raises the paper to his nose, Lucienne's writing on the other side is visible to the audience.) A bit heady. (He takes another sheet of paper and sits down on the chair to write. There is the sound of someone closing the door of the main entrance.)

(CAMILLE enters the room, speaking indistinctly without his palate.)

CAMILLE. *Bon jour*, Doctor. Your hotel is a crazy house, that's what it is.

FINACHE. What? What? Don't speak so fast!

CAMILLE. If you knew what happened!

FINACHE. Put your palate in your mouth! After all the trouble I went to, to bring it to you.

CAMILLE. I lost my palate.

FINACHE. Eh?

CAMILLE. An Italian knocked it out of my mouth, with a punch in the jaw. (He mimics giving somebody a blow.)

FINACHE (who has a great deal of trouble understanding him). An Italian gave you a punch in the jaw?

CAMILLE. Yes. That's not the only thing that happened to me. I've lived a nightmare today. The Hotel Pussycat and Tournel and Raymonde --Chandebise carrying wood. Mme. Homenidès and her husband running around with a revolv-



er. Bang! Bang! What a drama! (He falls into a chair.)

(ANTOINETTE arrives from the library and exchanges a surreptitious wave of the hand with CAMILLE, while speaking to FINACHE.)

ANTOINETTE. Madame sends me to ask the Doctor how Monsieur is.

FINACHE. You can tell her he's much better. (Getting up.) Or rather, no. I'll tell her myself.

CAMILLE. What's the matter?

FINACHE. Nothing. Chandebise is a little sick.

CAMILLE. What next?

(ETIENNE comes down the stairs.)

ETIENNE. Monsieur is in bed.

FINACHE. That's perfect.

ETIENNE (taking the hat that Poche left, from the table). Good evening, Monsieur Camille.

CAMILLE. Good evening, Etienne.

FINACHE. Etienne, go and prepare the ammonia solution, while I visit with Madame.

ETIENNE. Yes, Doctor. (Pauses by the door in the back. FINACHE goes into the library D L and ANTOINETTE saunters out after him.

ETIENNE exits U L.)

CAMILLE. I'm positively stupified. I feel like a feather in a cyclone. My mind is slipping.

(POCHE comes down the stairs, still in his bathrobe.)

POCHE. Oh, excuse me.

CAMILLE (jumping). Victor Emmanuel!

POCHE (joking, affecting a patronizing tone of voice). Now there's a man I saw today in the Hotel Pussycat.

CAMILLE (to himself). He did recognize me. I had a reason, an excellent reason for being there. There was a person----(POCHE listens to him with concern, and even bends discreetly for a moment, while he tries to see what is going on down Camille's throat.)

POCHE (to audience). What's the matter with him?

CAMILLE (disconcerted). What?

POCHE. Spit it out, man. Spit it out.

CAMILLE (vexed). But I have nothing in my mouth. (Continuing.) Now, I was saying, there was a person. Oh. Anyhow, it was only for insurance.

POCHE (interrupting). I don't care about that.

Right now, I am dying of thirst. Somebody said they would bring me something to drink, and I believe they forgot.

CAMILLE. Who's that? (CAMILLE pronounces it "oo at.")

POCHE. Oo at?

CAMILLE. Oo at.

POCHE (understanding). Oh! Who's that? Why are you saying "oo at?" Oh, well. The Doctor----

CAMILLE (in a hurry). He must have forgotten. I'll go.

POCHE. Thank you. I have a terrible thirst. (Goes back up the stairs.)

CAMILLE. Ha, ha. And I was afraid of being scolded. He took it very well. I thought he had very narrow ideas, but he has some which are very, very liberal.

(The noise of the main entrance door is heard, and



then CHANDEBISE enters U R. NOTE: The actor playing the dual roles has simply taken off his bathrobe so that he can come back on immediately as the uniformed Chandebise.)

CAMILLE (upon seeing CHANDEBISE almost at the same time he has just seen Poche go up stairs). Oh!

CHANDEBISE (startled by Camille's shout). What's the matter?

CAMILLE (distraught, pointing in succession to CHANDEBISE, then to the stairs). Oh, my God! Here! And there! My God! I'm crazy!

CHANDEBISE (taking two steps toward him).

Camille. Control yourself.

CAMILLE. I'm crazy. (He disappears through the door U L.)

CHANDEBISE (stupified by this reception). He's going crazy! Everyone's going crazy. What a nightmare. (Seeing his jacket.) My jacket. Someone brought it back. Thank God! Now I can take off this uniform. (As he speaks, he takes off the uniform jacket and cap, which he places on the table. He puts on his own jacket, muttering.) Sneaking around like a thief in this get-up. Stealing up the back stairs. What a nightmare. (He sinks into a chair.)

(ETIENNE comes in from U L.)

ETIENNE. What's the matter with Monsieur Camille?

CHANDEBISE. That's what I was just asking myself, Etienne.

ETIENNE (in hearing himself addressed by his name). Monsieur recognizes me?

CHANDEBISE. Why shouldn't I recognize you?

ETIENNE (rapidly). I don't know, sir.

(At this moment, CAMILLE erupts into the room, coming from the library, followed by FINACHE, RAYMONDE, TOURNEL and LUCIENNE.)

CAMILLE. He must be two. I swear it. He must be two. (Pointing.) There! And there!

EVERYBODY. What? What?

CAMILLE (running toward the rear). I am going crazy. I'm going crazy. (He disappears through the vestibule U R.)

TOURNEL. What's the matter with him?

RAYMONDE (walking toward her husband). My dear. Are you feeling----

CHANDEBISE. You! Madame! Here! (Noticing TOURNEL.) And Tournel with you!

RAYMONDE and TOURNEL (together). What?

CHANDEBISE (who has jumped at TOURNEL). What were you doing when I surprised you in that shady house?

RAYMONDE. Again?

TOURNEL (held by CHANDEBISE). We have explained everything one hundred times.

CHANDEBISE. You have explained nothing. (Letting go of him.)

RAYMONDE. My dear.

CHANDEBISE (walking menacingly toward them). All of you, get out.

LUCIENNE. Monsieur Chandebise.

CHANDEBISE. Madame, excuse me. (To the others.) Out! I don't trust myself.

FINACHE (exhorting them all to go back into the library). Don't irritate him. He's in the middle of a crisis. Come back when he's calmer. (He gestures to ETIENNE, who leaves U L.)

RAYMONDE. Another crisis. I've had enough of



them. (She leaves D L with LUCIENNE.)

FINACHE. Tournel, I beg of you----

TOURNEL (following the others). He gets worse and worse. (Goes out D L.)

FINACHE (once everybody has left). Now then, my friend. What's the trouble?

CHANDEBISE. Excuse me, Finache. I permitted myself a moment of anger. I'll calm down in a moment.

FINACHE. Of course. I've already seen improvement. You can recognize people. You know who you are.

CHANDEBISE (bewildered). I'm able to recognize people? I know who I am? Listen, I may have been angry, but I'm not insane.

FINACHE (quickly). Of course not, I can see that. All the same, in your place, I would have remained in bed.

CHANDEBISE. In bed?

FINACHE. Why did you put your jacket back on?

CHANDEBISE. I've had enough of walking around dressed as a hotel porter, that's why.

FINACHE (raising his eyes to heaven). The hotel porter.

CHANDEBISE. My God! The embarrassment.

FINACHE (to audience). Here we go again.

CHANDEBISE. In a uniform. A liveried jacket.

FINACHE (to himself). It's a fixation.

CHANDEBISE. And I have seen enough of your Hotel Pussycat.

FINACHE. You were there?

CHANDEBISE. Yes, there getting a beating every six minutes, stuffed into a uniform and locked in a room. I've been running over rooftops, breaking my neck, with that Spanish madman on my tail. (Muttering.) Was I there?

FINACHE (to himself). He is sick! He is very

sick!

CHANDEBISE. I've had enough.

(ETIENNE enters from U L carrying a glass of water at arm's length.)

ETIENNE. Here you are, sir.

CHANDEBISE (turning around, as he sees ETIENNE). What is it?

ETIENNE. The Doctor asked me----

FINACHE (to CHANDEBISE). That's right. (To ETIENNE). I'll take that, Etienne.

ETIENNE (to FINACHE). Is Monsieur better?

FINACHE (taking the glass and holding it in the same way ETIENNE had, whispering). Delirious.

CHANDEBISE. What is it?

FINACHE (approaching him, but keeping the glass at a respectable distance from his nose).

Drink it. After all the emotion you've been through, this will revive your spirits.

CHANDEBISE. You're the doctor. (He takes the glass. As CHANDEBISE is about to drink, FINACHE puts his hand over the top of the glass.)

FINACHE. You must drink it all at once. It's quite strong.

CHANDEBISE. Good. (He takes a big mouthful, then stops himself from swallowing as the taste registers. His eyes pop, he bangs the glass down on the table and runs toward the French window.)

FINACHE (running behind him). Swallow it. Swallow it. (CHANDEBISE, who has rapidly opened the window, spits outside.)

CHANDEBISE (furiously). What are you trying to do to me?



FINACHE. See here, Chandebise!

CHANDEBISE (pushing him away). Of all the asinine tricks. (He goes U L.)

FINACHE (who is following him). Where are you going?

CHANDEBISE. To rinse out my mouth. If you like that stuff so much, you drink it. (He goes out. A bell is heard.)

ETIENNE. Somebody is ringing. (He goes to the main door.)

FINACHE (crestfallen, examining the glass put down by CHANDEBISE). Well, it was a nice try.

FERRAILLON (voice off U R). M. Chandebise?

ETIENNE (voice off U R). This way, sir.

FINACHE. It's Ferrailon.

FERRAILLON (still off U R). Doctor.

FINACHE. Come on in.

(FERRAILLON enters, followed by ETIENNE.)

FERRAILLON. I have come to bring back an object which was found in my hotel, and which belongs to Monsieur Camille Chandebise. (He takes out Camille's palate.)

ETIENNE. I recognize that. I was the one who found it.

FERRAILLON. Oh? (Bowing.) Monsieur.

ETIENNE (introducing himself). Etienne, the butler.

FERRAILLON (very coldly). Delighted.

FINACHE (who has been squinting at the object which is in Ferrailon's hands). Let's see it. (FERRAILLON hands him the palate.) That's Camille's palate. But how did you know that it was his?

FERRAILLON. His name and address are engraved on it.

FINACHE. So they are. "Camille Chandebise, 95 Mailare Blvd." Very clever.

FERRAILLON. And convenient, if one has forgotten his calling card.

FINACHE. He'll be so glad to get it back. I'll give it to him. (He goes D L into the library.)

FERRAILLON (spying the uniform and the cap left by Chandebise). Ha? If I'm not mistaken, that's Poche's uniform. (He takes it.) And his cap. (To ETIENNE.) Did my hotel porter come here?

ETIENNE. Your porter? Why would he come here?

(CHANDEBISE enters through the door U L and walks vigorously downstage.)

CHANDEBISE. That joke was in very bad taste.

FERRAILLON (at the sight of CHANDEBISE).

Poche! What are you doing here? (He starts toward him.)

CHANDEBISE (distracted). Oh, no! Not in my own home! (He runs, but FERRAILLON blocks his passage.)

FERRAILLON. You donkey. What are you doing here? (He seizes him.) Strutting about town in the Pussycat uniform!

CHANDEBISE. Let me go.

ETIENNE (trying to separate them). Sir! What are you doing?

FERRAILLON (to ETIENNE, as he continues to struggle with CHANDEBISE). Stay out of this.

CHANDEBISE (succeeding, thanks to Etienne's intervention, in breaking away). Hang on to him. He's mad. (He runs out the main door.)

FERRAILLON (now struggling with ETIENNE).

Leave me alone, you--butler.

ETIENNE. Now see here! That was M. Chandebise.



My employer.

FERRAILLON (pushing him away). I know my own hotel porter. (He runs out the main door, taking the uniform and cap with him.)

ETIENNE (running off after him). He can't be!

(CHANDEBISE sticks his head in gingerly through door U L.)

CHANDEBISE. Has he gone? (Comes downstage, out of breath.) I'm getting good at this. Out the front door--in the back. (Breathing somewhat more calmly.) Well, anyway, he's gone. (At this moment, one hears a confused noise of voices in the foyer.)

ETIENNE (offstage). Please, sir. Let me announce you.

HOMENIDES (off stage). I will come in, I tell you. I will come in.

CHANDEBISE. What's that?

(HOMENIDES explodes into room. He has a pistol box under his arm.)

HOMENIDES. There he is. There he is.

CHANDEBISE (concerned). Homenidès! (He starts to run away.)

HOMENIDES. Stay where you are!

CHANDEBISE (very pitifully). My dear friend.

HOMENIDES (with terrifying eyes). There are no more friends. (He places his pistol box on a chair with a thump, then he says:) You escaped me a little while ago, but now I find you again. I have my freedom, because I promise to the Commissioner of Police that I would never make use of the revolver no more.

CHANDEBISE. What a good Commissioner.

HOMENIDES. And so--(Opening his pistol box.)-- I have brought my dueling pistols.

CHANDEBISE (jumping backward). What?

HOMENIDES (reassuring him with a gesture). Yes. But don't fear nothing. I am not going to suicide you. I do not wish to be a murderer.

CHANDEBISE (a little reassured). Of course you don't.

HOMENIDES. Here are two pistols. One is loaded. The other is not.

CHANDEBISE. I prefer the first. (HOMENIDES lets out a tremendous roar, which makes CHANDEBISE jump. Then, all business, he takes a piece of chalk out of the box.)

HOMENIDES. And so I take some chalk and I make a target with it on your heart. (He rapidly makes a circle with the chalk on the left side of Chande-bise's chest.)

CHANDEBISE. Please. (He tries to erase the target with his hands.)

HOMENIDES (also designing a rapid circle on his own chest). And I do the same.

CHANDEBISE (to the audience). He must have been a tailor.

HOMENIDES (who has put down the chalk and taken up his pistols). We take the pistols, aim just so, for our target----(He pats his chest.) Then bang, bang! The one who has the filled gun, he lives.

CHANDEBISE. And--and the other?

HOMENIDES. In my country that's what we call a duel.

CHANDEBISE. I see.

HOMENIDES (taking up the box and offering it to CHANDEBISE). Take one of these pistols.

CHANDEBISE. No, thank you. (Attempting an



ingratiating laugh.) I never take anything between meals.

HOMENIDES (ferociously). Take one! Or I will commit the murder.

CHANDEBISE. He means it. Help--help! (He runs out the door U L.)

HOMENIDES (running after him). Chandebise! Come back here!

CHANDEBISE (off U L). Help! Help!

HOMENIDES (off U L). Coward! Come back!

CHANDEBISE (still off U L). Help! Help!

(CHANDEBISE reappears, coming through the door U R, and runs up the stairs. He disappears for a second, then bounds down the stairs.)

CHANDEBISE. I'm sleeping in there. I'm in my own bed! (To the audience.) The house is haunted. (He runs out again U L, closing and bolting the door behind him.)

(HOMENIDES has come through the main door. He runs toward the door through which Chandebise has escaped.)

HOMENIDES. Wait--Stop! (He bangs his nose against the bolted door, which he shakes in vain.)

VOICE OF CHANDEBISE (this should actually be the stage manager substituting for Chandebise, to give the actor time to switch into his Poche costume). Help! Help!

HOMENIDES (running back to where he left the pistols). I will shoot off the lock and then I will have him!

VOICE OF CHANDEBISE. Murder! Police!

HOMENIDES (running back to the bolted door and

taking aim with both pistols). Here I come, Chandebise!

(POCHE comes down the stairs and moves D R, in his bathrobe and still half asleep.)

POCHE. All this noise. It's impossible to snooze for five minutes.

HOMENIDES (seeing POCHE and running toward him with the two pistols in his hands). There you are! You miserable scum! Take this pistol!

POCHE (looking for an escape route). It's the Martian!

HOMENIDES (rushing toward him, blocking all exits). I will kill you!

POCHE. What are you saying? (He backs away toward window.)

HOMENIDES. You will never escape me now. Take a pistol or I commit murder.

POCHE (to audience, deadpan). Did you ever have one of those days? (He turns and leaps from the open window.)

HOMENIDES (arriving at the window, and not able to repress a movement of fright). *Caramba!* he'll kill himself! (Looking out.) He's not hurt at all. In that case, I will kill him! (He opens his collar and wipes his brow, then he notices the glass left on the table by Chandebise and he crosses to it, saying:) Well, that's convenient. (He takes a great gulp, goes through the identical reaction as Chandebise, runs over to the window, and spits it out.) Agh! (He sits down in the chair by the desk.) What filthy things they drink in this house. (Then, sniff-the air above the desk.) What's that smell? (It registers.) The perfume of the letter! My



wife's perfume. (He takes one of the sheets of paper, which is the one left by Lucienne in the first act.) And the same writing paper---- (Examining it.) My wife's handwriting. (Reading.) "Sir. I saw you the other evening at the Palais-Royal." The letter to Chandebise, but I have that in my pocket. (As he speaks, he has taken the other letter out of his pocket.) But why? Why in the writing desk of Mme. Chandebise? I have to find out! (Runs toward the door U L and bangs on it with all his might.) Open up! Open!

(TOURNEL comes from the library.)

TOURNEL. Now what?

HOMENIDES (jumping at him). Tournel. You tell me----

TOURNEL. It's the wild man.

HOMENIDES. This letter?

TOURNEL. Take your hands off me!

(RAYMONDE appears from the library.)

RAYMONDE. What's the matter now?

HOMENIDES (releasing TOURNEL with a push, which makes him lose his balance, and going straight to RAYMONDE). I found this letter among your papers.

RAYMONDE. You were rummaging around in my papers?

HOMENIDES. That's not the question. (Trying to contain his rage.) Why? Why is this my wife's handwriting?

RAYMONDE (beside herself). Oh, dear!

HOMENIDES. Is there somebody in your house who is writing love letters?

RAYMONDE. Yes. In my house. That should prove to you your wife is innocent.

HOMENIDES. *Como!*

RAYMONDE. Yes. *Como!* If there were the slightest intrigue between your wife and my husband, it would certainly not be in my stationery cabinet.

HOMENIDES (still angry). Then explain.

(LUCIENNE comes in from the library.)

RAYMONDE (as LUCIENNE enters). Perhaps you'd rather hear it from your wife.

HOMENIDES (to LUCIENNE, who is hesitating at the door). All right, tell me.

LUCIENNE (making a movement as if to run away). Tell you!

HOMENIDES. I beg of you. Stay. This letter, and this letter. Why?

LUCIENNE (seeing both copies of her letter in her husband's hands, looking at RAYMONDE). It's not my secret.

RAYMONDE. Put his mind at rest, Lucienne.

HOMENIDES (beseechingly). *Por Favor.*

LUCIENNE (to RAYMONDE). You really want me to?

RAYMONDE (with indifference). Go ahead.

LUCIENNE. So be it. (To her husband.) What an Othello you are! (To RAYMONDE, as she points to her husband.) Ah. *Que tonto.* (To HOMENIDES.) *Raimunda creia tener motivo de dudar de la fidelidad de su marido.*

HOMENIDES (suddenly). *Como?*

LUCIENNE. *Entonces para probarlo decidio darle una cita galante--a la cual ella tambien asistiria.*

HOMENIDES. *Pero, la carta! La carta!* (He waves the letter.)



LUCIENNE (coming upstage). What? *La carta?*  
*La carta? Espera, hombre.* (Very emphatically.) *Si ella hubiese escrito la carta a su marido, este hubiera reconocido su escritura.*

HOMENIDES (a ray of hope in his eyes, as the truth begins to dawn). *Despuès. Despuès.*

LUCIENNE. *Entonces ella me ha encargado de escribir en su lugar.*

HOMENIDES (not able to believe his ears). *No. Es verdad?* (To RAYMONDE.) *Es verdad?*

RAYMONDE. What?

HOMENIDES. *Es verdad?*

RAYMONDE. Everything is completely *verdad*.

(To audience.) What have I got to lose?

HOMENIDES. *Ah! Señora! Señor! Cuando pienso que me metido tantas ideas en la cabeza!*

RAYMONDE (with many comical curtsies). Don't mention it. Really, don't mention it.

HOMENIDES (to LUCIENNE). *Que estúpido soy!* (Striking his breast. To TOURNEL and RAYMONDE:) *Ah. Que bruto soy! Que bruto soy!*

TOURNEL (imitating him, as he strikes his own chest). That's what I've said all along.

HOMENIDES (who already is no longer listening, to LUCIENNE with great enthusiasm). *Ah, querida. Perdoname.*

LUCIENNE. *Te perdono.*

HOMENIDES (going over with her, as far as the bench). *Ah, querida mia. Ah, yo te quiero.*

(They sit down together, hand in hand.)

RAYMONDE (to TOURNEL). How quickly people understand each other--in Spanish.

(At this moment, the door U L opens, and FINACHE, CAMILLE and CHANDEBISE enter rapidly.)

FINACHE (his arm around Camille's shoulder).

Come now, if we don't start using our minds, we're going to lose them.

CAMILLE (speaking clearly, as he's wearing his palate). I tell you, I saw him at one and the same time, over here and over there. (He indicates the foyer and upstairs.)

CHANDEBISE. And I was nose to nose with myself, sleeping in my own bed. (Stop and looks at CAMILLE, astonished.) You're talking.

FINACHE. That's no mystery. He has a silver palate.

HOMENIDES (still seated). *Que? Que?*

CHANDEBISE (terror-stricken). Homenidès!

HOMENIDES (stopping him with a gesture). Don't be afraid. I have calmed down. Now that I know the author of the letter. The lady of the theater was not my wife. (With some relish.) She was yours.

CHANDEBISE. She was? (To RAYMONDE.) You?

RAYMONDE. We keep telling you.

CHANDEBISE. You told me?

TOURNEL. Absolutely. We'd kiss and make up, and then--(Gesture.)--nothing accomplished. (He goes to stand near RAYMONDE.)

CHANDEBISE. What is he saying?

HOMENIDES. I'm sorry I made you jump out the window.

CHANDEBISE. What?

EVERYBODY. Out the window?

HOMENIDES. I was very upset.

CHANDEBISE. You made me jump out the window?

HOMENIDES. You came down the stairs, and hoopla! Out the window.

CHANDEBISE (incredulous). We are all victims of the same hallucination. What you saw jump out the window, that's what I saw in my bed.



CAMILLE. And what I saw--(Pointing.)--here and there.

CHANDEBISE. All of you. Listen. I have never jumped out of this window.

HOMENIDES. But I saw you.

FINACHE (taking his head between his two hands). I can't stand it.

TOURNEL. This is a fairy tale. A real fairy tale.

(FERRAILLON enters through main door, the bathrobe under his arm.)

FERRAILLON. Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen.

CHANDEBISE. The madman! (He hides behind the table which is nearest him.)

FINACHE and CAMILLE. Ferrailon!

RAYMONDE. The owner of the Hotel Pussycat.

FERRAILLON. Just now, as I was passing in the street, my hotel porter almost landed on my head. He jumped out of this window. (There's a general gasp.)

TOURNEL. It was the porter.

FERRAILLON. And he was running away with this clothing. (He presents the bathrobe.)

RAYMONDE. Why, that's my husband's. (Believing CHANDEBISE is still around.) This is yours. Where is he? (Calling out.) Victor Emmanuel. Victor Emmanuel.

EVERYONE. Victor Emmanuel!

FERRAILLON (noticing CHANDEBISE on all fours, hiding under the table). It's Poche! Poche again! (He grabs CHANDEBISE by the collar and pulls him from his hiding place.)

EVERYONE. Poche?

CHANDEBISE (coming out from under the table, pulled by FERRAILLON). Listen here, now.

FERRAILLON (starting the usual routine). You donkey. You pig.

RAYMONDE (jumping in between them). This is my husband, sir.

FERRAILLON (stepping back in astonishment). What?

CHANDEBISE. Every time we meet, he starts kicking me.

FERRAILLON. Your husband? This man?

RAYMONDE. M. Chandebise. Exactly.

FERRAILLON. But he's the image of Poche, my hotel porter. The one who jumped out the window.

CHANDEBISE. Now I understand. I understand everything. The man I took for myself, was Poche.

EVERYBODY. Poche!

RAYMONDE. And the one whom we saw in the hotel with the bottle in his hand.

TOURNEL. And the one we kissed.

ALL (at the same time). Poche!

LUCIENNE. The one who wanted to drag me to the wine merchant's.

CAMILLE. And who was carrying wood.

CHANDEBISE. Poche! Poche! I'm sorry he got out so quickly. I'd like to have seen him close up, this double of mine.

FERRAILLON. You have but to come to the Hotel Pussycat.

CHANDEBISE. Go to the Hotel Pussycat? No, thank you.

RAYMONDE (mockingly). Not even for the sake of the beautiful unknown lady who writes you so passionately?

CHANDEBISE. I suggest you laugh at yourself, madame, for having set this ridiculous trap.

RAYMONDE. I am sorry, but I doubted your



fidelity.

CHANDEBISE. Why should you do that?

RAYMONDE. Well, because, as a matter of fact, because----(She whispers in his ear, then continues.) So I had a little suspicion--a little flea in my ear.

CHANDEBISE. Damn the suspicion. (Accepting a challenge.) Damn the flea. I'll kill it tonight.

RAYMONDE. Will you?

CHANDEBISE (putting an arm around her affectionately). Well--we'll see.

CURTAIN

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## PRODUCTION NOTES

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### Revolving Bed (Act Two)

This may be set up quite simply on a small platform which works like a lazy-Susan. It is possible, however, to give the impression that the bed revolves by use of blackouts. Each time the bed is supposed to revolve, the lights in room five (the front room) should go out and the actors in the room should change places with those who are supposed to revolve in. This can be done through the bathroom door D L. Appropriate ad lib comments (e.g. "Why did the lights go out?" "What happened to the lights?" "Tournel, turn the lights on." "I didn't turn them out.") can be made by the stage manager and an assistant imitating the voices of the actors. The voices should come from U L so the audience will think the bed is actually revolving. At the beginning of Act II, after Ferrailon says, "The Hotel Pussycat is a respectable hotel." Eugenie responds, "If this is such a respectable place as you keep proclaiming, why is it that you can press a button, turn the lights out and revolve this bed into the next room?"



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## NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND CCSTUMES

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This play may be done in modern dress or in clothes typical of the turn of the century. There is nothing in the play that requires a particular style.

**VICTOR EMMANUEL CHANDEBISE:** He is a proper and prosperous Parisian insurance man. He appears more pompous on the surface than he is in fact. He wears sturdy suspenders under his vest and jacket. He also wears a hat when coming from outdoors.

**POCHE:** This part is played by the same actor who portrays Chandebise. Poche's thick speech and slow manner suggest that he is not too bright. He is the porter of the Hotel Pussycat and wears unkempt work clothes.

**CAMILLE CHANDEBISE:** Camille, Victor-Emmanuel's nephew, is tall, handsome and elegant. It is almost impossible, however, to understand him because of a speech defect (which is corrected later in the play). He wears a well-tailored suit.

**RAYMONDE CHANDEBISE:** She is Victor Emmanuel's wife. A pretty, vivacious woman, she is dressed in elegant good taste. Raymonde gets a slight suspicion or, as she puts it, "a flea in her ear," which launches the fantastic, farcical chain of events in this play. In Act Two, she wears a hat with a thick veil which hides her face.

**LUCIENNE HOMENIDES de HISTANGUA:** She is Histangua's wife and Raymonde's best friend. Lucienne is attractive and sophisticated, and very well dressed.

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**ANTOINETTE:** She is the Chandebise maid and Etienne's wife. She is a pert young woman in a maid's uniform. In Act Two she wears a hat and is not in uniform.

**ETIENNE:** He is the Chandebise butler and is dressed accordingly. He is very stuffy, with just a streak of bad taste.

**DR. FINACHE:** He is the medical examiner of Chandebise's insurance company, as well as the family physician and friend. He is a man of good humor.

**ROMAIN TOURNEL:** He is a man decidedly aware of his panache. He should be dressed nattily.

**CARLOSHOMENIDES de HISTANGUA:** He is a good-looking Spanish gentleman with a ferocious temper. He speaks in the stilted fashion of someone who does not completely understand what, to him, is a foreign language. His clothing is flamboyant.

**AUGUSTIN FERRAILLON:** He is the insistently respectable owner of the Hotel Pussycat. He may be a squat little man who carries his former chest and now belly prominently and proudly.

**OLYMPE FERRAILLON:** Ferrailon's wife is a formerly pretty woman, who has not given up. She is about 50, highly made up, tightly corseted and wearing a lot of jewelry.

**EUGENIE:** She is a saucy, sharp-tongued chambermaid at the Hotel Pussycat.



TIN: He is an elderly man in a night-  
gown.

CCO: He is a passionate Sicilian  
who speaks only Italian -- and that in a  
rough fashion.

## PROPERTIES

**GENERAL:** Chandebise living room: Love seat, end tables, two chairs, tea table, ornate writing desk and chair, high-back chairs, chiffonier, old-fashioned telephone on stand; electric call button near window; other furnishings such as lamps, curtains, etc. as desired. Pen and ink on desk, writing paper in top drawer of desk, key in closet door. Hotel Pussycat: Reception desk, coat rack; two canopied beds on revolving platform (see Production Notes, page 129), fireplace, large pushbuttons mounted on wall near beds, bolt on door to room L. Porter's jacket and cap on coat rack. Other furnishings such as mirrors, chairs, etc. as desired.

**CAMILLE:** Papers, pad and pencil in pocket, glass of water and packet of boric acid, silver palate.

**ANTOINETTE:** Bottle of perfume (Act One). Hat (Act Two). Apron and cap of her uniform (Act Three).

**ETIENNE:** Letter in tray (Act One). Bathrobe, glass of water (Act Three).

**FINACHE:** Jewel box containing silver palate, papers, watch.

**LUCIENNE:** Watch.

**RAYMONDE:** Handbag containing a pair of suspenders, hat (Act One). Hat with heavy veil, gloves (Act Two). Hat and gloves (Act Three).

**CHANDEBISE:** Eyeglasses, hat.

**TOURNEL:** Papers in port folio.

**HOMENIDES:** Revolver (Acts One and Two). Pistol box containing piece of chalk and two pistols, letter (Act Three).